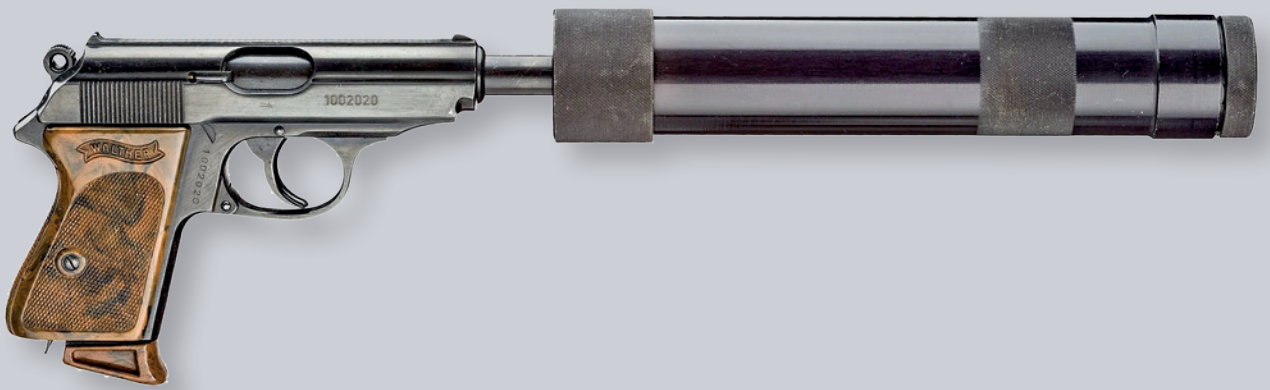




WALTHER PISTOLS

PP, PPK and P 38

JOHN WALTER





WEAPON

WALTHER PISTOLS



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INTRODUCTION

Zella St. Blasii, from a lithographed postcard dating prior to 1914. (Author's collection)

The Thüringen Forest, in east-central Germany, has a tradition of metalware production; many small forges and workshops grew up around Suhl, Zella St. Blasii, Mehlis, Wasungen, Schmalkalden and other settlements. The firearms industry in Suhl, its importance steadily growing, received a guild charter in 1563. Although a terrible fire in 1590 destroyed property, took lives and impaired trade sufficiently badly to influence a 1593 concordat with the rival guilds in neighbouring Zella St. Blasii and Mehlis, Suhl's workshops were speedily rebuilt. Suhl was sacked during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) and rebuilding began again. 'Quality' guns began to appear alongside the plain matchlocks that had previously predominated and gun-barrel proof – inaugurated in 1665 – finally legitimized unofficial view and proof activities that had been undertaken for many years.



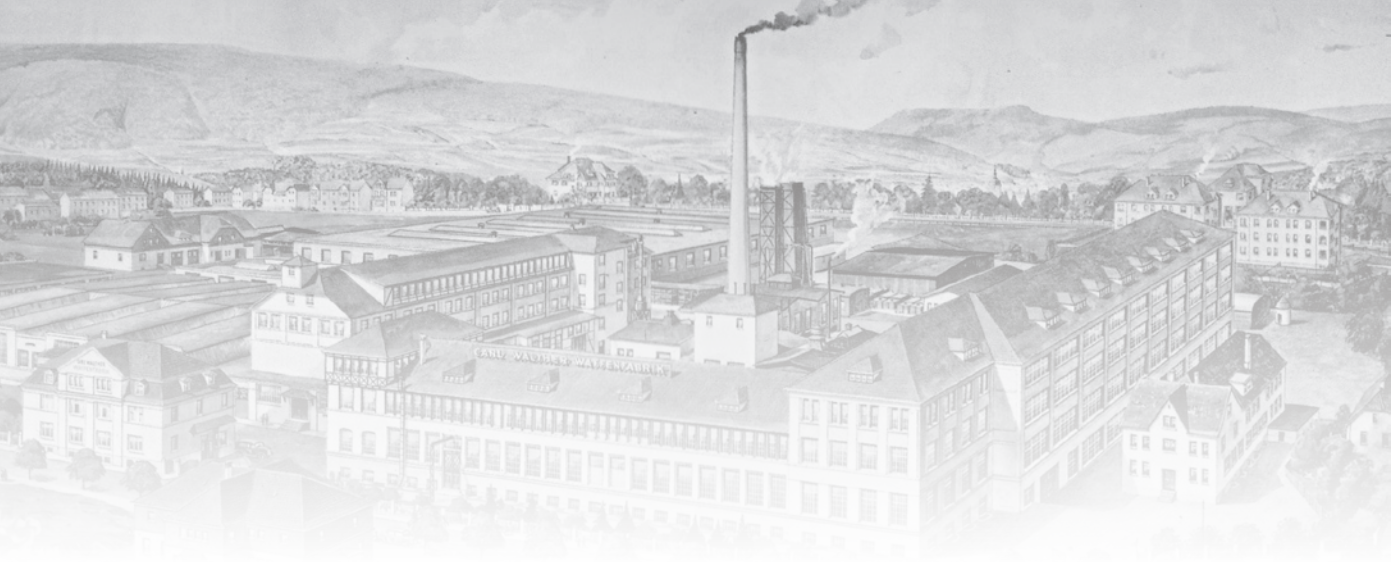
The P 38 saw widespread military service in German and other hands during and after World War II. Lacking a serial number ('2A' is a modern identifier) and with an ultra-simple slide mark, this P 38 is believed to have come from a pre-production trial batch. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

By 1815, Zella St. Blasii, Mehliß, Suhl and their surroundings were populated almost entirely by gun- and barrel smiths, journeymen, apprentices, engravers, stockmakers, bayonet smiths, and the inevitable middlemen. Among the Stockmar, Weiss, Kolbe and Spangenberg *Büchsenmachermeister* (master gunsmiths) were the Walthers, the first recorded mention of the family dating from a grant of Arms made in 1544. What may be the oldest Walther-made firearm was illustrated by J.F. Hayward in volume 2 of *The Art of the Gunmaker*. A smoothbore flintlock sporter, made in about 1735 for Ernst August von Sachsen Weimar, its lock plate is signed 'WALTHER À WASUNGEN'.

Carl Wilhelm Freund Walther was born in Zella St. Blasii on 22 November 1858, the son of August Theodor Albert Walther and Rosalie Wilhelmine Amalie Pistor – a direct descendant of the gunsmith Mathias Conrad Pistor. After serving apprenticeships with Willibald Barthelmes and then Albin Schneider, Carl worked on Mauser-type rifles being made by the gunmaker Jopp. In 1886, Carl opened a workshop in Zella St. Blasii, making target rifles based largely on Martini and Aydt actions, until attracted by the lure of the semi-automatic pistol. In 1903, a small three-floor factory was erected in Zella St. Blasii to replace the original workshop. Carl married Minna Georgine Pickert, daughter of the gunmaker Christian Friedrich Pickert, and fathered five sons – Fritz, Georg, Willi Alfred (killed on the Western Front in December 1914), Erich Hans and Carl Lothar – who were destined to follow their father's trade after his death in Zella on 9 July 1915.

Walther's PP (above) and PPK (below) semi-automatic pistols would also become closely associated with the Nazi regime in the 1930s and 1940s. This comparatively crudely finished PP, a mismatch of slide no. 389186P and frame no. 391017P, dates from the very end of World War II. Note that the slide bears Walther's 'ac' code. PPK no. 213908K displays the mark 'Fl. H. Kdtr. Mhm.', which is believed to signify 'Flieger-Kommandantur [Flughafen-] Mannheim', the administrative unit controlling a military airfield. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)





DEVELOPMENT

Semi-automatic innovation

Walther's impressive Zella-Mehlis factory, pictured in the early 1920s. (Author's collection)

THE FIRST PISTOLS

In 1905, Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre, working in Herstal near Liège in Belgium, introduced a Browning-designed blowback pocket pistol. This proved to be a runaway success, selling 100,000 by 1910. Carl Walther was just one of many who tried to design an effectual rival, but his first pistol, now sometimes identified as the *Venus-Pistole*, was a failure. Clearly inspired by the 1900-type FN-Browning, its recoil spring lay in the slide above the barrel.

Success did not come until Carl Walther's eldest son, Fritz, born in 1889, joined his father's company after serving an apprenticeship elsewhere. The existence of the 6.35mm **Selbstladepistole Modell 1** seems to have been announced in 1911, although some of Walther's sales literature, apparently in a later attempt to discredit Mauser, subsequently offered dates as early as 1908.

Though fewer than 30,000 Modell 1 pistols had been sold when World War I began – sales of the FN-Browning had by then topped 1 million – Walther's name had been established throughout Germany. The 1911 ALFA catalogue indicates that the Modell 1 pistol, retailing for 42 Marks, was cheaper than virtually all of its rivals excepting the Spanish-made Royal (40 Marks). The Pieper Modèle 1909 cost 45 Marks, while the FN-Browning cost 53.20 Marks; and the 6.35mm Bayard (made by Anciens Établissements Pieper) sold for 56.40 Marks. Emboldened, the Walther company introduced other pistols by 1914. The onset of World War I placed such great demands on output that a new building was erected in Zella St. Blasii and the old factory was sold to the gunmaker Oscar Will.



The **Modell 2** pistol was a simplified Modell 1, introduced commercially in 1914 even though Walther's sales literature sometimes misleadingly dated it to 1909. About 19,000 Modell 2s were made before production ceased in 1915, the highest serial number noted being 71556 although several thousand Modell 3 pistols were numbered in the same range.

The Modell 2's recoil spring is concentric with the barrel, being compressed against the standing frame by the knurled collar at the muzzle, and the original safety button was substituted by a radial lever on the left rear of the frame. The dismantling system of the Modell 1 was replaced by a knurled collar which was simply unscrewed to allow the recoil spring to be released; the slide could then be retracted, raised and lifted clear. A magazine-safety system was also fitted to many of these Walthers, consisting of a small spring-loaded bolt mounted in the frame that disengaged when the magazine was removed. The muzzle-collar dismantling system was protected by German Patent 256606, granted on 22 October 1911, and the retractable combination back sight/cocking indicator found on early pistols by 271863, granted in January 1913. The sight remained in its slide housing when the chamber was empty, but rose into the firing position when a cartridge entered in the chamber.

The **Modell 3** pistol – notably better finished than the Modell 1 – appeared c.1913–14, even though Walther's sales literature sometimes claimed 1910. Heavier and longer than the Modell 2, the Modell 3 chambered the 7.65mm Auto (.32 Browning) cartridge and had a detachable six-round box magazine in the butt. The advent of World War I meant that only a few thousand of these pistols were made, however.

The 7.65mm **Modell 4** pistol (see pages 8–9) was acquired by the military authorities, while the **Modell 5** pistol was a variant of the Modell 2. Although Walther's sales literature claimed that the Modell 5 dated from 1913, it actually appeared in 1915. Several machining

The 6.35mm Modell 1 pistol laid the basis for the Walther company's subsequent success. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

THE MODELL 4 AND MODELL 6

In May 1915, the GPK (Gewehr-Prüfungs-Kommission; Weapon Examination Commission) placed an order for 250,000 Modell 4 pistols as *Behelfspistolen*, substitutes for the standard service pistols, allowing the latter to be released for front-line duty. Consequently, many pre-1918 Walthers bear tiny military inspectors' stamps. Carl Walther did not live to see this guarantee of his company's success, however, dying on 9 July 1915 at the comparatively early age of 56.

Essentially an enlargement of the Modell 3 and sharing that pistol's unusual leftward ejection, the earliest Modell 4 pistols had a small dismantling catch on the front lower right side of the slide. The grip had been extended to accommodate two extra cartridges, while a light sheet-steel shroud projected from the slide to cover the extended barrel. Attached by a bayonet fitting, the shroud compressed the mainspring – concentric with the barrel – against a barrel-mounting block integral with the frame.

The extractor was exposed on the left side of the slide behind the ejection port; the trigger bar was exposed on the left side of the frame; and 12 retraction grooves, milled vertically, were in the slide above the grips. A radial safety lever on the rear left side of the frame behind the grip locked the hammer in the cocked position when rotated rearward to cover the letter 'F'.

The combination back sight/loaded-chamber indicator had soon been replaced by a robust 'V' notch which was simpler, stronger

and better suited to hard use. Changes to the stripping procedure required the muzzle shroud to be released by pressing inwards and unlocking by turning it through 90 degrees. The recoil spring then pushed the shroud forward out of the slide.

The updated Modell 4 had seven broad retraction grooves in the slide, milled diagonally, though the partially exposed trigger bar and leftward ejection were retained.

The GPK contract proved too much for Walther's facilities, and the company was forced to subcontract manufacturing work to Immanuel Meffert (mark IM), who in turn passed on some of the work to Christoph Funk (F), Heinrich Gering (G), F.W. Kessler (F.W.K.), Heinrich Krieghoff (an anchor motif), Mercedes Buromaschinen (M), Gebrüder Merkel (a shield bearing a GM monogram), Gebrüder Rempt (GR), Schmidt & Habermann (S&H), August Schuler (AS) and Sempert & Krieghoff (no special mark, though S&K has been found on pistols sold commercially). Subcontractors' marks will be found on the side of the trigger-guard web with the exception of Krieghoff's (on the left).

Large numbers of Modell 4 pistols were made in 1915–29, their serial numbers reportedly ranging from 20001 to 493750 but with gaps. The block 100001–275000 and possibly beyond seems to have been allocated to the military purchase. Markings customarily included 'SELBSTLADE-PISTOLE CAL. 7.65. WALTHER'S PATENT.' over the banner trademark on the left side of the slide, and, on Walther-assembled examples, 'Carl Walther



A typical wartime 7.65mm Modell 4, shown with its original holster, no. 65805 displays an anchor on the trigger guard showing that – Walther slide marks notwithstanding – this particular pistol was actually made by Heinrich Krieghoff during World War I. (Amoskeag Auctions, www.amoskeagauction.com)

WAFFENFABRIK Zella St. Blasii.' on the right. In 1919, however, Zella St. Blasii and Mehliß were united and pistols still to be assembled were duly marked 'Zella-Mehliß'. Grips generally bore 'CW' monograms.

In 1915, the military authorities requested pistol makers to submit simple designs that could chamber the standard 9mm Pistolenpatrone 08 cartridge. Walther offered the Modell 6, little more than an enlargement of the Modelle 5 and 7 sharing the blowback operation and an extension sleeve over the muzzle. The GPK also considered the 9mm Dreyse Pistole, which solved the cocking problem by including a separate cocking lever that worked at a mechanical advantage. Both pistols were rejected as unsuitable for military service, however, and design work soon ceased: the authorities had always viewed blowback pistols with suspicion, as anything more powerful than the 7.65mm (.32 ACP) Browning pistol cartridge increased chamber pressures, which promoted premature breech opening and case-head separations.

The Modell 6 relied on its powerful recoil spring and the sturdy slide/frame construction of the Modell 4 to prevent the slide being blown off and into the firer's face in an emergency. The barrel screwed into the standing frame, and the recoil spring was concentric. A lightweight sheet-steel shroud, carrying the fixed front-sight blade, attached inside the slide mouth by means of a bayonet joint. The pistol was hammer-fired and the trigger bar, positioned in the right side of the frame well, acted as a disconnector. A radial safety lever lay on the frame behind the left grip, and the magazine held eight rounds.

The slide had seven broad retraction grooves, milled diagonally, with 'Selbstlade-Pistole Cal. 9^{mm}/m. Walther's-Patent.' on the left side above the banner trademark and 'Carl Walther, Waffenfabrik, Zella St. Bl.' on the right side. The chequered grips displayed 'CW' monograms. Serial numbers have been reported in the 591–1039 range, but whether they began at 1 is still unknown.



Modell 6 pistol no. 1030 was assembled for trials during World War I. (Rock Island Auctions, www.rockislandauctions.com)

revisions were made to simplify (and hence cheapen) the manufacturing process. The 1913-patent back sight was discarded in favour of a fixed 'U' notch on all but a handful of the earliest examples that incorporated old slides; 16 narrow retraction grooves replace the original nine. Assessing how many Modell 5 pistols were made is complicated by Walther's penchant for mixing the serial-number ranges, but may have amounted to 120,000, with many bearing the company's post-1919 address: Zella St. Blasii and neighbouring Mehlis had amalgamated to form Zella-Mehlis, slide marks changing accordingly.

The **Modell 6** pistol (see pages 8–9) was the unsuccessful 9mm Parabellum military adaptation of the Modell 4. The 7.65mm **Modell 7** pistol, apparently introduced in 1916, had a slide like that of the Modell 5 and an elongated grip which accepted an eight-round magazine. The Modell 7 shared the dismantling system, safety mechanism and trigger of the Modell 5, but the hammer-type firing mechanism of the Modell 4 replaced the Modell 5's striker. Ejection is to the right and, as the extractor is set into the surface of the slide at the bottom of the ejection port, spent cartridge cases have a higher trajectory on ejection than those ejected from the Modell 4. Serial numbers reportedly run from 4001 to 84000 in the sequence that also contained Modelle 4 and 5 production.

The 11 November 1918 Armistice stopped pistol production in the Zella St. Blasii factory, but the workforce of 75 in 1915 had subsequently grown to nearly 500 to meet wartime demand and many men found themselves without employment once production had ceased. In desperation, Walther turned to manufacturing optical components until the Allies allowed assembly of the Modelle 4, 5 and 7 pistols to resume in 1920–21. During the intervening period, the towns of Zella St. Blasii and Mehlis had united, forming Zella-Mehlis, and Walther had developed improved pistol designs. A German patent granted in May 1921 (DRP 365265) included details of an improved striker mechanism 'for guns with closed frames'.



A typical 7.65mm Walther Modell 7, dating to post-1919 owing to the inclusion of 'Zella-Mehlis' in the mark on the right side of the slide. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)



The large 7.65mm Modell 8 and small 6.35mm Modell 9 pistols with their holsters. The Modell 9 was the first of a new class of pistol – *Westentaschenpistolen* ('shirt pocket pistols') – and inspired countless copies including the Mauser WTP 1, which appeared in 1923: The Walther and Mauser companies shared an intense rivalry, ensuring that whatever move one made, the other promptly countered. (Rock Island Auctions, www.rockislandauctions.com)

The 7.65mm **Modell 8** and 6.35mm **Modell 9** pistols appeared in 1922, and were so successful that manufacture of the Modelle 5 and 7 was discontinued. Manufacture of the Modell 4 continued until 1924, although 'new' pistols were still being assembled from existing parts as late as 1929. Walther's management realized, however, that limited commercial demand would continue for as long as the Great Depression persisted, and that unless a more powerful design was perfected, no new orders would be forthcoming from the armed forces. The Modelle 8 and 9 were produced in large quantities, with serial numbers of the Modell 8 continuing where those of the Modell 5 had stopped, running from 390001 to about 96900A, while those of the Modell 9 ran from 410001 up to 198000N. The suffixes had been added when each series had reached 1 million. Total production, therefore, has been estimated at about 146,000 Modell 8 and 249,000 Modell 9 pistols.

During this period, at least one toggle-lock pistol was assembled in accordance with patents granted to August Menz (see, particularly, DRP 326798 of 19 July 1916). Production of calculators also commenced – diversification had become the name of the game – but under the able guidance of Georg Walther, sales of pistols exceeded expectations. Fritz ran the firearms business; Erich concentrated on sales and distribution. Together, the brothers built a large and efficient organization.

Fritz Walther had begun to redesign the blowback pistols on which the company's success had been built. From this era came the first of the *Sportpistolen*; widely (but mistakenly) believed to have been introduced just before the Los Angeles Olympic Games of 1932, they actually date

from 1926–27. Then, in 1929–30, design of the *Polizei-Pistole* finally was perfected; patent DRP 578765 of 7 November 1930 protected its sophisticated safety and de-cocking systems.

THE *POLIZEI-PISTOLE*

The introduction of the *Polizei-Pistole*, generally known by the abbreviation ‘PP’, revolutionized the part of the firearms industry that was making pocket and personal-defence pistols. Up to that time, the Browning blowbacks made by Fabrique Nationale d’Armes de Guerre and Colt (not to mention the legion of Spanish copies) had held a virtual monopoly.

There has been much purposeless discussion concerning influences on the creation of the *Polizei-Pistole*. Fritz Walther’s detractors point to the work of two lesser-known inventors, Alois Tomiška and Sergei Korovin, both of whom had patented double-action trigger systems prior to 1914. Production of Tomiška’s Little Tom pistol, though comparatively small, created enough of a reputation to attract Fritz Walther’s attention. In 1922, Fritz is said to have approached Tomiška seeking to market pistols incorporating the latter’s patents. After purchasing the rights, however, Fritz either deliberately stalled until the basic patents expired, or laboured unsuccessfully to adapt the Little Tom to the company’s mass-production methods.

During this time, however, Fritz amalgamated Tomiška’s ideas with some of his own, and approached the Deutsches Patentamt with his

This *Polizei-Pistole*, no. 2, is believed to be a prototype or developmental model. The front of the slide is retained by a dovetail engaging a T-section frame extension, some of the lockwork components differ from the perfected parts, and the base of the magazine has an unusual alloy extension. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)



THE PP REVEALED

9mm *Polizei Pistole*

The *Polizei-Pistole* action is relatively simple. Pressure on the trigger (28) draws the trigger bar (18) forward, rotating the hammer by the action of the sear/hammer lifter (16) on the hammer-lifting arm. At the same time, the sear also lifts the hammer lock by pressing upward on it; only when the hammer lock is fully elevated can the hammer strike the firing pin. At all other times, the passage of hammer to pin is prevented by the interposition of the hammer lock on the hammer-body projection. When the hammer-lifting arm has rotated the hammer to its rearward limit, the sear disengages and the hammer flies forward to a position where (now that the hammer lock has been lifted) it can strike the head of the firing pin.

The pistol then fires, whereupon the slide reciprocates, riding over the hammer and forcing it back until the sear engages. The trigger bar has been disconnected from the sear during the recoil stroke, so the firer must release the trigger before the trigger bar can be pulled back to re-engage the sear. The trigger bar and the sear are enveloped by the metal of the sear itself, resulting in a captive system all but incapable of malfunctioning.

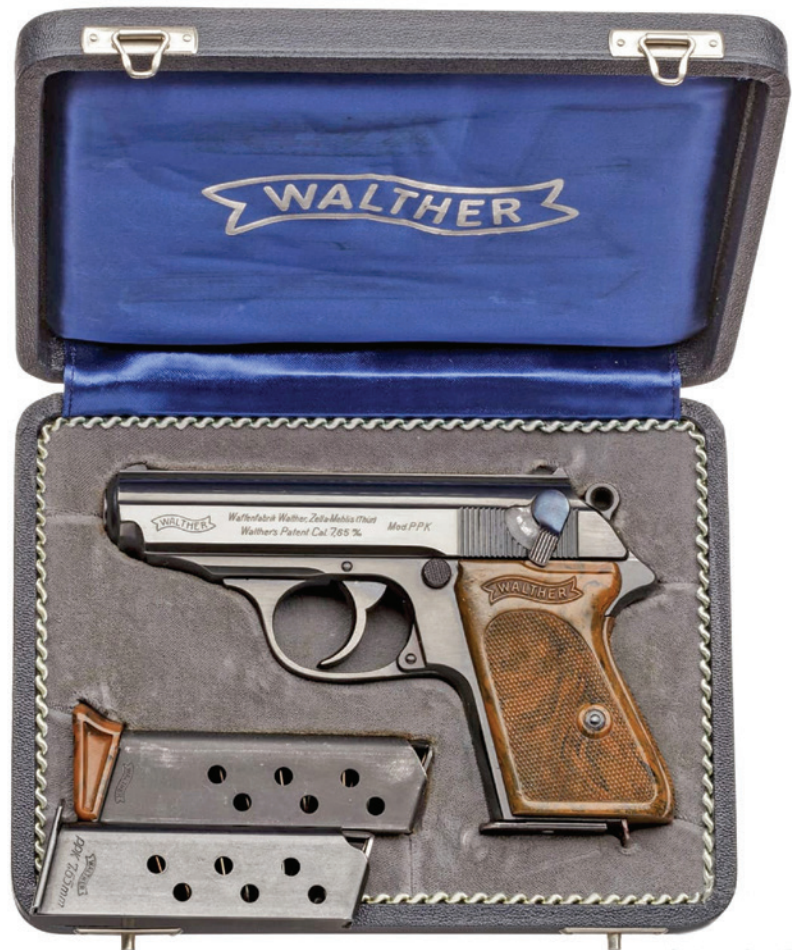
The trigger mechanism can be operated by thumb-cocking the hammer, when, owing to the deletion of the motion for which most energy was required – rotating the hammer to full cock by pressing the trigger – better accuracy results from the appreciably lighter pressure needed to release the hammer from the sear.



perfected designs. The resulting *Polizei-Pistole* was infinitely better than the Little Tom: strong, durable in spite of its complexity, elegantly designed and cleverly packaged, it had no peer in 1930. Consequently, the *Polizei-Pistole* (PP) and its reduced-size derivative the PPK were destined to be produced in huge quantities. When the Allies seized Zella-Mehlis in the spring of 1945, output of PPs was estimated to have been approximately 540,000, apparently numbered from 700501 to 397000P, alongside a little over 290,000 PPKs (754950–431097K).

The Walther pistol was known to the factory as the ‘Selbstlade Pistole Modell 1930’, after the year of its first commercial appearance, but was based on a series of patents granted to Fritz Walther in 1928–29. Initial advertising listed its dimensions as 170mm overall length, with a 98mm barrel, and a weight of about 600g. The pistol was 22mm thick and approximately 109mm high, and carried a detachable eight-round box magazine in the butt. It chambered the popular 7.65mm Auto (.32 Browning) and 9mm Short (.380 Browning) cartridges.

The earliest catalogue illustrations show ‘The New Walther Police Model’ with a slide marked ‘Waffenfabrik Walther. Zella Mehliis



The 7.65mm PPK no. 259811K, probably dating from 1940, still has ‘crown/N’ proof marks (not visible in this view). The 60-degree safety catch was introduced in 1938; the plush and satin-lined case was an optional extra. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

(Thür.)’ over ‘Walther’s Patent. Cal. 7,65^m’ ahead of the banner trademark, which lies in front of the safety lever thumbpiece. No *Polizei-Pistole* has yet been found matching this artist’s impression, however. The Walther banner is shown moulded into the base of the injection-moulded plastic grips, a signal pin is present above the hammer, and a magazine extension is stated as being available. It is notable that there is no ‘Mod. PP’ mark on the pistol; Walther apparently intended to call it the ‘Modell 10’, continuing the previous numerical sequence, before having a last-minute change of mind. The final prototype seems to have borne the serial number 750000, series production beginning at 750001.

The *Polizei-Pistole* was the first commercially successful pistol embodying a double-action trigger system that could fire by thumb-cocking the hammer or by simply pulling through on the trigger. Most previous pistols had used a single-action system in which the hammer had to be thumb-cocked or the slide retracted to cock and load. Walther is certainly not due credit as the father of double-action trigger systems, however. Such triggers had been successfully applied to pepperboxes and revolvers in the 19th century – designs from Cooper, Remington and others had seen service in the American Civil War (1861–65) – and many major manufacturers had successfully marketed them prior to 1914.

The PPK

The *Polizei-Pistole* was intended as a small holster pistol, but the state police of Prussia apparently indicated that a smaller pistol would be necessary for concealment in a shoulder holster. The result was what is now generally known as the ‘Polizei-Pistole, Kriminal’ or ‘PPK’; the origin of the designation, however, is still questionable. Explanations offered for the ‘K’ suffix include *Kriminal*[-*polizei*], *kurz* (‘short’) and *klein* (‘small’). The abbreviation should perhaps have been written ‘KPP’, but PPK persisted and Walther ultimately added it to slide-marking dies. The Walther broadsheet inserted in the 1943 edition of Karl Fischer’s *Waffen und Schiesstechnischer Leitfaden für die Ordnungspolizei* (Regular Police Force Technical Manual on Weapons and Shooting) fails to mention Kriminalpolizei in connection with the pistol. There is a suspicion that the pistol may originally have been called *Kleine Polizei Pistolen* (‘small police pistol’) until the advertising merits of *Kriminalpolizei* became obvious.

The first PPKs seem to have reached the commercial market in 1931. Pistol no. 754958 is a PPK marked as a *Polizei-Pistole*, but has a frame lacking the rear strap; consequently, the first correctly marked PPK may have been no. 755001. The prototype PPK is believed to have a reduced but conventionally forged grip, with front and back straps, and separate grips. However, the perfected version had an abbreviated grip with only a front strap, plus an enveloping one-piece grip.

Polizei-Pistole variations

The earliest *Polizei-Pistolen*, numbered below about 765000, had a split or two-piece firing pin and a bent ribband spring for the firing-pin lock; the firing pin could not be seen when the safety catch was in the 'safe' position. The early 'fat' safety lever, which came with the two-part firing pin, had seven flutes; the later 'slim' version had just five flutes.

The firing-pin assembly was composed of the safety-catch lever, the small firing-pin piece, its spring and a retaining piece, the firing-pin block (pinned in the slide), the long firing-pin piece and its spring, but was deemed unnecessarily complicated. Consequently, some of the parts were simplified at about the time the PPK appeared. The first stage was to simplify the firing-pin assembly, which thereafter consisted of the 90-degree safety-catch stem and firing-pin block (in the slide), together with a one-piece firing pin powered by a small coil spring. The replacement of the ribband-pattern firing-pin lock spring with a small coil occurred next, together with revisions to the frame and sear.

A further modification to the safety catch was made in the mid-1930s, when the support block for the firing pin, previously pinned in the slide, became integral with the slide itself. The barrel was rebated for part of its length to increase the clearance for the recoil spring, the signal pin was revised (its spring moving from behind the shoulder to in front) and the hammer was grooved to clear it.

Some *Polizei-Pistolen*, especially those acquired for the Reichsbank (Central Bank), were duly modified to accept the new firing-pin/spring assembly, probably when they were returned to the Reichsbank's own armourers for repairs, or to the factory after supplies of the original components had been exhausted. These modified pistols can sometimes be identified by serial numbers engraved vertically on the right side of the slide ahead of the retraction grooves.

The earliest *Polizei-Pistolen* often lacked the signal pin that protruded from the rear of the slide above the hammer when there was a cartridge in the chamber. Originally optional, this feature proved so popular that it was virtually standardized after 1933. As late as 1935, however, pistols were being offered with the signal pin at an additional cost.

The earliest PP hammers were not grooved to accommodate the signal pin, which was driven forward to nick the rim of the chambered cartridge each time the hammer fell. This oversight was soon corrected, and is rarely if ever encountered on the PPK.

In about 1937, the 90-degree safety catch was replaced by a short-throw 60-degree pattern and a change was made in the slide to accommodate it. The original hammer, with a small transverse hole, was replaced by a lightened pattern with a markedly larger hole.

Apart from changes in markings, no important alterations were made until – in 1943 – the step behind the rear trigger-guard pivot, below the magazine catch, was eliminated to save machine time. The projection of the frame beneath the hammer had been lengthened slightly earlier to answer complaints that the web of the firer's thumb could be caught by the hammer. This change occurred in the region of pistol no. 220000P but some degree of overlap is to be expected.

The quality of the finish deteriorated as the war progressed, from a rich commercial blue to a blue-wash over the major components. Fine polishing and attention to detail were sacrificed in pursuit of speed of manufacture, post-1942 pistols often showing coarse milling marks, and squared-off edges became sloppily rounded. Pistols made towards the end of the war abandoned the signal pin to simplify production, and, finally, shortages of oil required to mould the plastic grips forced the substitution of pressed wood-fibre grips.

Accessories included a *Leuchtkorn* luminous radium night sight, which clipped around standard front sights in which a distinctive notch had been cut; extension magazines, some containing two additional rounds and others with luminous, red or green bases, were also available.

Many 7.65mm pistols will be found with lanyard loops set in a screwed-in eye on the base of the butt on the left side: these were generally added after World War II to virtually any pistol which was considered to be in good enough condition for issue to the French armed forces. Original Walther-made loops, fixed on the base of the butt behind the magazine well, were commonly found on pistols issued to the Swedish police.

A few 7.65 and 9mm pistols had been provided with butt-heel magazine catches in 1937–38, and some 9mm examples were purchased by the HWaA (Heereswaffenamt; Army Weapons Agency) during World War II. Whether the military authorities were simply buying pistols that incorporated parts left in stock, or whether they were worried about the efficacy of the standard cross-bolt magazine catch cannot now be determined; the P 08 had used a cross-bolt catch for 30 years, but the butt-heel pattern was easier to make and less likely to be depressed by a nervous firer. Butt-heel magazine-catch pistols are generally confined to 9mm *Polizei-Pistolen* and those used by *Polizei-Direktion München* (Munich Police Department) marked 'PDM'.

Alloy frames fitted to experimental *Armee-Pistolen* and *Heeres-Pistolen* in the late 1930s proved incapable of withstanding the battering of 9mm Parabellum ammunition, but the duraluminium frame first tried on the *Polizei-Pistole* in 1933 proved to be much more successful: the low power of the 7.65mm and 9mm Short cartridges avoided 'fretting', resulting from friction between steel and alloy surfaces as they meshed. Alloy-frame pistols were produced in quantity from c.1933 in the regular serial-number ranges from about 802000 onward. Pre-war examples were anodized an attractive shade of blue, but most wartime-made pistols had a baked-on black paint finish.

The PPK had an abbreviated grip with only a front strap, enveloping one-piece grips and a shortened frame. As the sear rotated through an aperture cut in the frame, however, a weakness lay in the area of the back-strap joint, even in the *Polizei-Pistole*. Alloy frames were particularly prone to cracking until changes in the machining process created a bridge of metal to act as a strengthener. This necessitated a change in the sear design, and the trigger-bar actuating spring was discarded once it was found that the trigger spring could be bent far enough to fulfil the same function.

Additional chamberings

The successful introduction of the PP and PPK in 7.65mm and 9mm encouraged Walther to add 6.35mm and 5.6mm (.22LR) chamberings, but using four different cartridges required differing rifling to maintain optimal performance. All PPs and PPKs were rifled with six grooves, but the clockwise twist made one complete turn in 190mm (6.35mm), 210mm (.22 and 9mm) or 240mm (7.65mm).

The 7.65mm pistols were by far the most popular of the chamberings, production being estimated at 502,000 PPs and 270,000 PPKs. The 9mm version was much less popular, however, though the Luftwaffe seems to have acquired a substantial number. Output is estimated at a mere 19,000 PPs and 10,000 PPKs, numbered in the 782300–321410P and 705900–303590K groups respectively.

The 5.6mm chambering had some value for training, but the 6.35mm version was deemed too ineffectual to be satisfactory for personal defence. Indeed, on 8 November 1943, the OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres; High Command of the Army) ordered all pistols with calibres of 6.35mm or under to be withdrawn from service. One estimate suggests that production of the 6.35mm pistols amounted to just 400 PPs and 220 PPKs, their serial numbers being scattered within the 76260–910950 and 774600–930650 groups.

The **5.6mm lfb (.22 Long Rifle rimfire) Polizei-Pistole**, introduced in 1932, soon proved to be a better commercial proposition than the ill-fated 6.35mm version. Changes were made to the standard centrefire ignition system, and the signal pin was omitted as it would have rested on the primer-containing cartridge rim.

A few rimfire pistols were acquired by the HWaA and the RZM (Reichszeugmeisterei; State Material Control Office) for training. Their slides were marked conventionally, except for 'Cal. .22'; this was hand-stamped until the rimfire variant became successful enough for the calibre to become part of the slide-inscription die. The pistols cost RM 49.5 in the mid-1930s, special extra-long walnut grips being RM 10.5 extra. No decision to discontinue production was ever taken, but wartime concentration on the 7.65mm and 9mm patterns meant that few rimfires were made after 1940 – though, ironically, many of the late-production pistols made in 1945 (in the 430000 group) chambered the 5.6mm round.

Introduced in 1932, fewer than 500 *Polizei-Pistolen* in **6.35mm Auto (.25 Browning)** calibre were made before production ceased in 1935. They were simply too big for the minimally powered cartridge, and much too expensive. Numbered between 775000 and 780000, the 6.35mm *Polizei-Pistolen* displayed the banner trademark on the slide ahead of 'Waffenfabrik Walther. Zella Mehlis (Thür.)' over 'Walther's Patent Cal. 6.35^m/_m'; in addition, 'Mod. PP' (or 'Mod. PPK') lay immediately ahead of the safety-catch thumbpiece. Examination reveals the calibre marking to have been hand-stamped, the remainder of the mark being rolled in.

Known officially as 'Selbstlade Pistolen Walther, Polizei Modell, Kaliber 7.65mm' or simply as 'P W PP Kal.7,65', the **7.65mm Auto (.32 Browning)** – chambering a low-power cartridge ideally suited to blowback operation – was the most popular of the four regular *Polizei-*



Pistolen. Introduced late in 1929, numbered from 750001 and followed by PPKs from no. 778500, the slides are marked identically with the 9mm version, except for ‘Cal. 7,65^m/m’.

Production continued during World War II, serial numbers becoming separated into separate blocks once they reached 1 million. *Polizei-Pistolen* were given a ‘P’ suffix, while the PPK was distinguished by ‘K’. A few pistols were made in 1945 with the original Walther code-mark replacing the banner trademark; they are marked, typically, 384771P above a large ‘ac’ on the right side of the slide (not the left) and were apparently confined to the 370000P–394000P block. Lastly, perhaps 2,000 *Polizei-Pistolen* produced in the final weeks of the war bore no marks other than an occasional proof. The highest recorded PP serial number is currently 399990P; PPK numbers reach at least 431332K, but no PPK has been seen with ‘ac’ marks.

Introduced in 1933, and chambering the popular but ineffectual 9mm Short cartridge, serial numbers of the **9mm Kurz** (.380 **Browning**) sub-variant began at about 782300 and continued, interspersed with PPKs and other PPs, to 999999. The numbering sequence recommenced at 100001P in 1939. Slides displayed the banner trademark ahead of ‘Waffenfabrik Walther. Zella Mehliis (Thür.)’ over ‘Walther’s Patent Cal. 9^m/m’. The designation mark, ‘Mod. PP’, lay behind the maker’s mark ahead of the safety catch thumbpiece. The pistols were officially known as the ‘Selbstlade Pistole Walther, Polizei Modell, Kaliber 9mm kurz’, but this was widely abbreviated to ‘P W PP Kal.9’. Early *Polizei-Pistolen* in this chambering still had the frame-mounted magazine-release button, whereas later ones had the butt-heel type.

Awarded in 1939 to the winner of the SS (Schutzstaffel; Protection Squadron) national pistol-shooting competition, .22-calibre PPK no. 214094K displays an ‘after-market’ eagle-and-swastika *Hoheitsabzeichen* (national emblem) on the grip. (Rock Island Auctions, www.rockislandauctions.com)



Ulm-made 7.65mm PPK no. 255558, proved in 1971, is shown with a detachable silencer. Silenced Walthers were used by the infamous Stasi, the police unit of East Germany's Ministerium für Staatsicherheit (Ministry for State Security), and seven are known to have been assembled in the late 1950s by London gunmakers Cogswell & Harrison in response to an order placed by Saudi Arabia. (Arundel Militaria, www.deactivated-guns.co.uk)

Non-standard *Polizei-Pistolen*

Developmental prototypes often differed considerably from one another in detail. Some have been reported with single-action triggers and at least one with an additional Modell 9-type safety protruding from the top of the left grip.

Ten long-barrelled *Polizei-Pistolen* (six blued, four matt-chromed) were supplied to Waffen Glaser of Zürich, Switzerland, in the mid-1930s. Chambering the 7.65mm cartridge, these pistols had barrels and slides approximately 25mm longer than usual and non-standard recoil springs. Their numbers remain uncertain, but included 779150 and 779153.

At least one fully automatic pistol was made from an altered *Polizei-Pistole* slide/frame unit, with the grip widened to accept a 15-round staggered-row box magazine. This 9mm pistol has post-1940 'eagle/N' nitro proofs, a standard *Polizei-Pistole* trigger system and an additional selector lever on the right rear of the frame marked 'D' (rear) and 'E' (front), presumably the abbreviations for *Dauerfeuer* (automatic fire) and *Einzelfeuer* (semi-automatic fire). The selector works by isolating the disconnecter.

Silencer-fitted pistols are also reported from time to time. Some are after-market adaptations, but others were made during World War II for the RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt; State Security Main Office), created on 27 September 1939, which supervised acquisition of weapons by the Sicherheitspolizei (Security Police), Kriminalpolizei (plainclothes police), Geheime Staatspolizei (Gestapo; Secret State Police) and Sicherheitsdienst (SD; Security Service).

The KPK

Thought to have been designed in about 1942, this little-known derivative of the *Polizei-Pistole* has grips like those of the *Ehrenwaffe des Politischen Leiters* (honorary firearm of the political leadership), displaying a moulded eagle-and-swastika motif, and trigger and sear systems duplicating the PP and PPK. The earliest prototypes of what has been listed as the *Kriminalpolizei-Pistole-Kurz* seem to have had PPK slides, but later examples used a special slide lacking the safety catch. The rear of the slide was extended to shroud all but the tip of the hammer. Surviving KPKs have blued steel slides bearing a banner and 'KPK', while the alloy frames are generally unfinished. Chambering seems to have been confined to 7.65mm Browning; overall length was about 158mm and weight with an empty magazine was a mere 415g.

ULTRA-PISTOLEN

Early in the 1930s, the management of Gustav Genschow & Co. AG (Geco) of Karlsruhe-Durlach decided to rationalize the range of cartridges used in blowback pistols. The 6.45mm Geco, developed in 1933, was intended to replace the 6.35mm and 7.65mm Browning rounds.

Trials were apparently undertaken with specially chambered *Polizei-Pistolen*, but the 6.45mm cartridge proved to be unsuccessful, possibly because advantages over its industry-standard rivals were too meagre to justify manufacture. Genschow, by no means discouraged, then produced 8mm and 9mm Geco patterns in 1934. Only the 8mm version, appreciably more powerful than 9mm Short, was produced in quantity and – once again – it is assumed that Walthers were used during development.

Early in 1936, the OKL (Oberkommando der Luftwaffe; High Command of the Air Force) learned of Genschow's plans. The Luftwaffe saw the 9mm Geco *Erhöhte-Leistungs-Patrone* (enhanced-performance cartridge), less powerful than 9mm Parabellum, as being ideally suited for compact blowback pistols

destined for aircrew. Renamed '9mm Ultra', the cartridge fired a 7g bullet at 300m/sec – potentially a good man-stopper – but only 20,000 cartridges are said to have been produced before the proximity of war, large-scale rearmament and a genuine lack of need brought production to an end.

Ten *Polizei-Pistolen* chambering the 9mm Ultra cartridge are also said to have been assembled, though evidence is lacking. At least one *Ultra-Pistole* was made on the basis of the PP, however. The *Ultra-Pistole* has an abbreviated slide from which the barrel protrudes, but the greatest difference concerns the position of the recoil spring. The exposed barrel, rendering a concentric spring impracticable, forced the designers to adopt an indirect-spring system somewhat similar to that of the Mauser HSv. The position of the trigger components precluded the use of levers on both sides of the frame, however, and it is likely that asymmetrical stresses created by firing compromised long-term utility. In addition, the onset of war may have had an influence: in September 1941, the OKL ordered 2,000 *Polizei-Pistolen* and effectively consigned the *Ultra-Pistole* project to history.



The *Ultra-Pistole* relied on a square-section actuating spring pinned to the lower front left side of the butt acting on a lever to hold the breech shut. The recoiling slide then rotated the lever back against the spring, which compressed against shoulders on an auxiliary strut. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

TOWARDS THE P 38

Suggestions that the P 08 ('Luger') pistol should be replaced by something simpler had been made to the Waffenamt der Reichswehrministerium (Weapons Agency of the Reich Ministry of Defence) as early as December 1926. In March 1927, a report noted that the simplest FN-Browning pistol required only 55 manufacturing procedures compared to about 1,180 for the P 08. Pistols submitted by Simson & Co. were tested in 1928–30 and a blowback pistol from machine-tool maker Richard Stock appeared in March 1931: the end was clearly in sight for the Luger, and among the contenders to replace it was the Walther *Militär-Pistole*.

The *Militär-Pistole* is considerably bigger than the *Polizei-Pistole*, usually with a parallel side grip and a lanyard loop on the butt heel. Its slide displays the banner trademark ahead of 'Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella Mehlis (Thür.)' above 'Walther's Patent Cal. 9^{mm}/m'. The designation 'Mod. M. P.' lies behind the main inscription immediately ahead of the safety-lever thumbpiece. Production was meagre; surviving pistols are numbered 5008 and 5009, and a 'still to be authenticated' 5016, which suggests that the prototype – 'MP 0', in accordance with nomenclature suggested by Karl Schäfer in the *Deutsches Waffen-Journal* – was numbered 5000 or 5001. MP I no. 5009, shown here, has a straight grip, but others survive with an arched back strap. (Rock Island Auctions, www.rockislandauctions.com)

The *Militär-Pistole*

Apparently dating from 1930, the *Militär-Pistole* is a greatly enlarged *Polizei-Pistole* chambering the powerful 9mm Pistolenpatrone 08 cartridge. It seems to have been offered to the HWaA as a possible replacement for the P 08 at a time when the future of the latter was under review. However, although the *Militär-Pistole* was easy to make, being based on an existing pistol, it was rejected on account of its simple blowback operation: the HWaA wanted the safety inherent in a locked breech.

The MP II, believed to date from c.1931 and offered in 9mm Steyr in addition to 9mm Parabellum, relied on a separate block to delay the opening of the breech but was soon supplanted by the locked-breech MP III. Pistol no. 101, one of only two survivors of this 'hesitation-lock' MP II pattern, also has a spur hammer instead of a ring and is assumed to have been an attempt to satisfy HWaA demands before the blowback system was finally rejected. Possibly no more than 25 blowback *Militär-Pistolen* were ever made, but their failure spurred Walther to develop the *Armee-Pistole*, the *Heeres-Pistole* and, finally, the P 38.



Trials and tribulations

When German rearmament began in earnest in 1934, German military experts had long since concluded that the P 08 was too difficult to make and too complicated to maintain under service conditions. Although the vast numbers of reworked and newly made Lugers satisfied the armed forces' short-term needs, it was clear that a new long-term solution had to be found.

Large-scale trials intended to replace the Luger began in this period, but much of the story remains vague. Among the pistols known to have been submitted, however, were the Walther *Militär-Pistolen*, the Mauser HS and HSv, the Sauer *Heeres-Pistole* and a prototype from Berlin-Suhler-Werke. The Walther MP I, the HS and (probably) the Sauer were blowback pistols, the Walther MP II was a delayed-blowback pistol, and the HSv and the Berlin-Suhler-Werke prototype had breech-locks. Other weapons were probably tested by the HWaA, including the Belgian FN-Browning GP Mle 35 and the French Petter, but the Germans were keen to develop an indigenous design.

Two 9mm Parabellum blowback pistols, the Dreyse-Pistole and the Walther Modell 6, had been tested during World War I, but high residual-pressure levels in such pistols inevitably led to extraction failures, broken extractors and case-head separations. Consequently, blowback pistols stood little or no chance of adoption, though many such weapons served aircrew, staff officers and paramilitary personnel with distinction during World War II. They all chambered low-powered cartridges such as the 7.65mm and 9mm Short.

The HWaA, deeming the margins of safety to be insufficient, predictably rejected blowback pistols in favour of the locked-breech submissions. Walther seems to have submitted the prototype *Armee-Pistole*, the MP III, as trials were being undertaken with the Mauser HS and/or the HSv, which dates it to 1936. Faults were clearly found in the MP III's design, however, and the HSv was judged superior in some respects.

Cleve Howell, reviewing the Mauser HSv in the August 1946 issue of *The American Rifleman*, observed that the Mauser slide, narrower than that of the Walther, reduced weight. This, he said, was important in the context of a military pistol. He also believed the Mauser HSv to have had better safety features and to be more pleasing aesthetically, but also noted that it was much more difficult to make in quantity than the Walther design. It is also believed that the locking system of the HSv, involving a rocking block located under the barrel, pinned at the rear, may have performed badly under service conditions. Whatever the reasons, the HWaA ultimately preferred the Walther MP III.

Walther had made a Menz toggle-lock pistol in the early 1920s, from which the twin lateral mainsprings of the MP III were adapted, and found inspiration for the locking-block system in the Mauser C 96 and the Bergmann-Mars. Work to develop a breech-locking system combining strength with simplicity is believed to have begun in 1935. By the end of the year, Fritz Walther and Fritz Barthelmes had developed a mechanism that was efficient enough to warrant applying for patents, evidence that dates development within a few months.



Fritz Walther (1889–1966) and his chief engineer Fritz Barthelmes (1899–1973), co-designers of the P 38. (Author's archives)

Refining the *Militär-Pistole*

The first locked-breech prototype pistol was probably made in Walther's Zella-Mehlis factory late in 1935, but it would have been little more than a crude tool-room model intended to test the Walther-Barthelmes locking system. Once the efficacy of the basic design had been demonstrated, the MP III was assembled by more traditional methods to ensure a longer life. The new pistol may date either from the end of 1935 or the beginning of 1936, before the patent applications were filed (the first reaching the German agent office on 13 February): the illustrations accompanying the applications, notably for what was to become DRP 706038, are much more like the later *Armee-Pistole*. Additionally, the prototype MP III has a different locking mechanism in which the locking-block faces, actuated by cams cut in the sides of the slide, lie on the side of the breech.

The sheet-metal Walther MP III (left) was the prototype of what became the P 38. The MP III bore the slide inscription 'Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella-Mehlis (Thür.)' above the company banner, which in turn appeared above the widely spaced 'Walther's Patent. Mod. MP'. The MP III was followed by the more conventionally constructed MP IV (right) with its distinctively shaped slide. The MP IV serial number, 1002, suggests the MP III may have been regarded as no. 1001 even if unmarked. (Author's archives)

The MP III differed considerably from the patent-specification drawings and the later *Armee-Pistolen*. A unique slide forging had two shallow protruding housings on each side, extending forward from a point level with the rear of the trigger guard. The slide-retaining or 'hold-open' catch was also unique, but the basic design features were clearly evident. The HWaA was quickly made aware that Walther's locked-breech pistols existed, though few trials seem to have been undertaken until the perfected prototype (the MP IV or possibly the *Armee-Pistole*) appeared c.1936.



The *Armee-Pistole*

Whether the *Armee-Pistole* and MP IV are contemporaneous is debatable, as it seems likely that the former was a direct descendant of the original MP I made before the German military authorities demanded an exposed hammer. The slide of the *Armee-Pistole* only had a single protruding housing on each side, the original locking block of the MP III having been replaced by an under-barrel pattern; the front of the slide had a barrel band to improve the slide/barrel bearing; and the frame-forging was wholly revised.

The slide-retaining catch was altered, although the efficient Luger-type radial dismantling lever was retained on the front left side of the frame. The *Armee-Pistole* utilized the double-action lockwork of its predecessors, the patented safety catch of the PP/PPK series (with 60-degree radial movement) and an enclosed hammer. The magazine catch remained on the butt heel and the slide had 16 diagonally milled retraction grooves.

Once development had proceeded sufficiently, work on a pre-production series began so that pistols could be supplied to the HWaA. While tests were being conducted, and because the authorities were keen to make them as rigorous as possible, Walther embarked on a series of experiments to discover if the *Armee-Pistole* had commercial appeal by distributing small numbers of pistols to the gun trade both inside and outside Germany. Serial numbers appear to lie between 01 and 051, but the unconfirmed existence of 0129 has been reported and output as high as 200 pistols has been claimed.

Armee-Pistolen, being largely hand-finished, differed in small details. Several different types of front sight and grips are known, though not all are original. Barrel lengths also vary: no. 010, for example, has a 20cm barrel, and no. 029 has a barrel so short that the front sight abuts the front of the slide. Most of the pistols chambered the 9mm Parabellum cartridge and bore the slide inscription 'Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella-Mehlis (Thür.)' above 'Armee-Pistole Cal. 9^m/_m', a banner trademark being set into the front of the lower line. These marks appeared on the left side of the slide, with the upper line rolled into the protruding lock housing.

At least one pilot model was made for the 7.65mm Parabellum cartridge, which shared case-head dimensions with the 9mm Parabellum round and made conversion an easy task, while .38 Super and .45 ACP chamberings were developed to encourage US interest. It has also been rumoured that *Armee-Pistolen* were made or adapted for the short-lived 9mm Ultra cartridge, developed by Genschow in the late 1930s to explore the limits of blowback operation in handguns, but these Walthers were specially chambered *Polizei-Pistolen* and the so-called *Ultra-Pistole*.

Armee-Pistolen were sometimes accompanied by special holster-stocks, while development of aluminium frames was conducted in an effort to save weight and discover whether such alloys had any advantageous metallurgical properties. It is evident that fretting occurred after fewer than 2,000 rounds had been fired. The experiments were then abandoned, development of suitable aluminium-alloy frames awaiting advances in aerospace technology in the 1950s.

Armee-Pistole no. 042 was a refinement of the MP II, with a single external rib on each side of the slide instead of two. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)



Armee-Pistolen resemble the later P 38, but their spurless hammer is carried within the closed rear of the slide. The shallow protruding housings, one forged into each side of the slide immediately below the breech, are also very distinctive.

The pistols were largely hand-finished from first-class materials and were generally beautifully rust blued. One plated specimen has been reported, but the finish may not be original. The grips were usually of high-quality partly chequered walnut, but they vary in style; some catalogue illustrations show the company banner stamped in the grips above the chequering, though this may simply have been artistic licence as no specimen has yet been found.

The manual safety was operated by a radial lever on the left rear side of the slide. Shoulders on its stem engaged recesses in the side of the firing pin, locking the pin in position, while the safety-catch stem acted as a de-cocking lever to lower the hammer. It could not strike the firing pin, because the locking block barred its passage. This feature was viewed with unjustifiable suspicion by detractors of the Walther design, but Hoffschmidt (1975: 11) observed that although it was disconcerting to see the hammer fall on a live cartridge, the system worked very well. The slide could be cycled with the safety catch in the 'safe' position, though the trigger stayed back and would not move forward until the safety catch was moved to the 'fire' position.

The design of the trigger mechanism and the safety catch was virtually beyond reproach apart, perhaps, from excessive complication. The multiplicity of manual and mechanical safeties made it impossible to fire the gun accidentally, however, while the multi-purpose trigger – the first of its type to be robust enough for military use – gave a choice of action. The pistol could be loaded and cocked by retracting the slide, and fired by an immediate pull on the trigger; or the safety catch could be used to drop the hammer safely onto a loaded chamber.

In the event of a misfire, the trigger could be pulled repeatedly, on each occasion delivering a fresh blow to the primer, but most suspect cartridges fired at the second attempt.

The MP IV, dating from c.1935–36, seems to have been developed during the period when the HWaA was pursuing trials. The differences between the MP IV and the *Armee-Pistole* were relatively minor: a new flat-side slide to replace the protruding-housing pattern, a frame-forging with a deeper trigger-guard bow, and a trigger with a markedly shallower curve. The large trigger guard may have been substituted in response to Swedish or other demands, and was undeniably suited to gloved fingers.

Only a few MP IVs have been located. No. 1003 has been authenticated, but the series may have run as high as no. 1020, which had an experimental double-action only trigger system. Most chambered the 9mm Parabellum cartridge but at least one was made for the .45 ACP cartridge, with heavier-than-normal construction and the magazine's capacity restricted to seven rounds. A 7.65mm Parabellum variant may also have been developed.

MP IVs, in common with the *Armee-Pistolen*, had chequered wooden grips and exemplary finish. The left side of their slides was marked 'Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella-Mehlis (Thür.)' over 'Walther's Patent Cal. 9^m/_m Mod. MP' and the banner. There were minor differences in the shape and height of the front sights, and machining variations on some components testified to the pistols' semi-experimental status.

The Heeres-Pistole

While the HWaA pursued trials, Walther pressed ahead with the commercial variant of what was to become the P 38. Known as the *Heeres-Pistole* ('Army Pistol') and advertised for sale as early as April 1938, the earliest examples will be found with pre-1940 'crown/N' proof marks on the frame, the barrel block and the locking piece. The marks 'Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella-Mehlis (Thür.)' over 'Walther's Patent Cal 9^m/_m Mod. HP' lie in two equal lines behind the banner on the left side of the slide. The pistols had retractable rectangular-head firing pins and concealed extractors.

Changes were made to the slide inscription at about the time an exposed extractor was adopted, the 'Mod. HP' part moving back towards the safety-lever recess. The lowest serial number reported with the new marking is H1489. Chequered walnut grips were customary, although black plastic was optional. On 1 April 1940, the proof marks changed to 'eagle/N'.

A few hundred *Heeres-Pistolen* went to Sweden prior to April 1940, followed by a smaller batch later that year. Their serial numbers included H1060 and H1445, but these were not sequential and the later pistols lacked the serial-number prefix. By pistol no. 2211, a cylindrical-head firing pin was being used. Relatively few 7.65mm pistols were made – the observed serial-number range is 2996–3259 – but the calibre mark on the slide, which appears to have been added separately, suggests that production was never that great. Minor changes were then made to the lanyard loop, which became bigger and rectangular, and ribbed dark-brown synthetic grips appeared. Some pistols numbered in the 6874–6948 group had alloy frames which differed in some respects from the standard version, but were apparently unsuccessful.

The 9mm MP V was the final stage in the development of the P 38. This is no. 017, dating from 1938. The MP V had the flat-sided slide of the MP IV, slightly wider than that of the *Armee-Pistole* as the locking recesses were carried entirely within the side walls instead of in the protruding housings. The slide forging was cut back to expose the hammer and the 15 slide-retraction grooves were moved forward to abut the safety-lever recess. Several versions of the MP V were assembled, with minor alterations being incorporated in each successive pistol. Initially, all the parts were machined from solid stock, but the sear was soon greatly simplified; the separate hold-open catch spring was eliminated; a stamped-steel hold-open catch was developed; and a simplified fluted-head (rather than chequered) dismantling catch appeared. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

When World War II began, manufacture of pistols for commercial sale seems to have been stopped, though enough parts remained on hand to allow assembly to continue for some time. Small-scale manufacture of key parts may have recommenced in 1943, allowing the military authorities to acquire small quantities of a mixed-batch of *Heeres-Pistolen*. Sometimes containing commercial components, these pistols often showed tool marks through their weak-blue finish. A single WaA 359 (Waffenamt sub-bureau 359, based in Zella-Mehlis) inspector's mark may be found, though some of the pistols went to Croatia on completion.

The last variant, assembled in 1945 from *Heeres-Pistole* frames and newly made P 38 slides, had 'ac 45' code/date marks and a 0-prefix serial number such as 026475. A military proof mark and two WaA 359 inspectors' marks show that these pistols were pressed into military service towards the end of hostilities.

Success at last

The advent of the MP IV may have coincided with the end of HWaA trials. The enclosed hammer was heartily disliked, as the only way to obtain single-action fire – which, owing to the lighter trigger pull, gave greater accuracy – was to retract the slide, which automatically ejected the chambered round. Consequently, Walther and Barthelmes were asked to add an external hammer so that the mechanism could be thumb-cocked without moving the slide.



THE P 38 EXPOSED

9mm Pistolet 38

The hammer and trigger mechanism of the P 38 consisted of eight parts. The operating sequence is essentially that of the *Armee-Pistole* lockwork, as pressure on the trigger (19) pulls the trigger bar (28) forward, rocking the sear (29) and rotating the hammer (1) by means of the hammer lifter (30), until the sear releases the hammer at the end of its travel. The hammer then flies forward and strikes the firing pin, which can move forward only because the actuator has raised the spring-loaded firing-pin lock. The unlocking, cocking and re-locking cycle then begins, during

which the slide rides back over the hammer and disconnects the trigger bar from the sear. When the firer releases the trigger, the spring-loaded trigger bar re-engages the sear and the pistol can be fired again. The hammer can be lowered onto the firing-pin head, as the pin is locked rigidly in place and there is no danger. Applying the safety catch when the hammer is cocked achieves the same end, but the hammer flies disconcertingly forward as the catch stem rotates; however, this is not as dangerous as it looks, as the firing-pin lock is engaged.



- | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Hammer | 11. Locking block | 21. Magazine follower |
| 2. Back sight | 12. Locking-block spring | 22. Magazine spring |
| 3. Safety-catch spindle | 13. Barrel | 23. Magazine base |
| 4. Signal-pin spring | 14. Front sight | 24. Magazine catch |
| 5. Signal pin/loaded-chamber indicator | 15. Dismantling catch | 25. Grip |
| 6. Firing-pin spring | 16. Dismantling-catch plunger and spring | 26. Hammer spring |
| 7. Firing pin | 17. Frame | 27. Hammer-spring strut |
| 8. Top cover | 18. Trigger spring | 28. Trigger bar |
| 9. Cartridge in chamber | 19. Trigger | 29. Sear/cocking piece |
| 10. Locking-block actuating pin | 20. Cartridges in magazine | 30. Hammer lifter |

The *Armee-Pistole* and MP IV were redesigned either late in 1936 or early in 1937, and the so-called ‘fifth prototype’ or MP V appeared. Its slide was marked ‘Waffenfabrik Walther, Zella-Mehlis (Thür)’ over ‘Walther’s Patent Cal. 9^{m/m} Mod. MP’, in two lines behind the banner. Some pistols had hammer mechanisms of the type protected by DRP 726501 of 11 January 1938, with round PP-type hammer spurs, while others (presumably later) had pointed spurs of the type associated with the *Heeres-Pistole* and the P 38. Some of the walnut grips were chequered; others remained plain.

The trigger and safety mechanism of the perfected MP V differed from those of the *Armee-Pistole* and the MP IV partly because of the new-type hammer, but also because HWaA personnel disliked the hammer lock. This component was undeniably efficient and safe, but the authorities worried about what could happen if it failed to work properly. If the pistols were then prevented from firing at all – a safety feature of great commercial appeal – a soldier could be left holding a jammed weapon.

The modified safety system of the MP V, *Heeres-Pistole* and P 38, in which the hammer lock was replaced by a firing-pin lock, was essentially a retrograde step: if the pin lock failed, the pistol would still fire. The theoretical danger this entailed could be justified, however, as the pistol had to function in combat: the Soviet Tokarev pistol, which had no manual safety features at all, represented the views expressed by many military authorities. The MP IV had represented the views of designers seeking perfection, and a commercial market in which safety was of paramount concern.

The *Armee-Pistole* hammer could only reach the firing pin in the final stages of deliberate firing. Replacing the hammer lock with a firing-pin lock, however, meant that the hammer head was often in contact with the firing pin – prevented from transferring a blow to the primer only by the metal of the pin-lock body and safety-catch stem when the safety was applied. This was acceptable as long as the material and workmanship of the pin lock and the safety-catch stem were of good quality. Some wartime parts were made of inferior crystalline steels, however, and as a consequence individual pistols were prone to failure when dropped on their hammers or when the hammer was released onto the firing-pin head. The pin lock or safety-catch stem fractured, and the hammer drove the firing-pin forward; if the chamber was loaded, the pistol promptly fired. Nevertheless, it is clear that reports of accidental firing were greatly exaggerated during World War II, probably to stop Allied servicemen using captured pistols.

All MP Vs, early *Heeres-Pistolen* and the first P 38s had rectangular-head firing pins which retracted into the breechblock when the safety catch was applied. In these pistols, the descending hammer could only strike the metal of the block, but the firing pins of all later P 38s – including those made after production resumed in 1957 – had non-retractable cylindrical-head pins. When the safety catch was applied, therefore, the hammer face struck the pin head. Although several minor alterations have been made to the firing pins since 1945, only the last of them changed the situation.



USE

The PP, PPK and P 38 in service

The *Polizei-Pistole* was the first handgun of its type to be successful not only commercially but also in a military context. There can be no doubt that the Walther family's amicable relationship with high-ranking members of the NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeitspartei; National Socialist German Workers' Party) proved beneficial, but success was also due to good-quality manufacture and advanced design, particularly of the trigger and safety systems, which allowed *Polizei-Pistolen* to be carried with a cartridge in the chamber, to be fired simply by pulling through on the trigger without the need to release the safety catch. This could mean the difference between life and death in battlefield combat or for a policeman encountering a miscreant in a back-alley.

The 'eagle/N' proof marks date 7.65mm *Heeres-Pistole* no. 3259, the commercial exposed-hammer predecessor of the P 38, to 1940. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

THE PP AND PPK IN GERMAN SERVICE TO 1945

Polizei-Pistolen were widely favoured by police, paramilitary and military authorities alike. Their compact dimensions suited them to airmen and tank crews in particular, but many Heer (Army) officers, as a rule, acquired examples privately.

The German political formations began to buy *Polizei-Pistolen* as early as 1935–36, when PPs and PPKs were numbered in a single cumulative block. In 1938, however, the series was split when serial number 1000000 was reached. Numbering then recommenced at 100001P and 172001K though it seems that PPK stragglers, perhaps already complete, had serial numbers running as high as 100700 without a suffix.

A few PPKs in two different serial-number blocks had been given 'W'-suffix numbers, the purpose of which is no longer clear, and some

MARKS FOUND ON THE PP AND PPK

In terms of proof marks, *Polizei-Pistolen* originally bore the commercial crown over N ('crown/N') nitro proof mark, until this was replaced by law – with effect from 1 April 1940 – by an 'eagle/N' proof mark. Serial numbers suggest that virtually all pistols below 143500P and 242165K display a 'crown/N'; that the official changeover occurred somewhere in the region of 162000P and 255000K; and that almost all pistols numbered above 184300P and 261000K have the 'eagle/N' proof mark.

Turning to property and unit marks, *Polizei-Pistolen* usually bear a large eagle-and-swastika mark accompanied by 'C' or 'F', the swastika being stylized into a circle. Police-unit marks are much more rarely found on Walthers than on the P 08 and its accessories. A few examples applied in accordance with regulations published for the Prussian police in 1932 have been reported, such as 'L.St.' and 'S.An.' for Landjägeri Stettin and Schutzpolizei Aachen respectively, but Bavarian police marks such as 'P.D.M.' or 'P.D.N.' – Polizei Direktion München (Munich Police Department) and Polizei Direktion Nürnberg (Nuremberg Police Department) respectively – are more common. Pistols used in Berlin often displayed a mark now usually termed a 'rosette', while 'Rpl.', for Rigspolitiet (state police), indicated use in Denmark after the end of World War II. Walthers used in Norway are usually marked 'Politi'.

Other marks include: 'C.P.B.' on PPKs purchased on behalf of the Commerz- und Privatbank; 'DRP' or 'D.R.P.', usually on the grip straps of PPs and PPKs serving with the Deutsche Reichspost (postal service); and 'NSKK' or 'N.S.K.K.', on PPs and PPKs used by the NSKK (Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps; state transport service).

NSKK *Polizei-Pistolen* are particularly rare. Many of them had a special slide-inscription die in which the standard Walther legend was narrowed to make room for the NSKK eagle *Hoheitsabzeichen* (national emblem). Observed serial numbers currently range from 779066 to 200733P. 'RB' is widely associated with pistols acquired for the Reichsbank, but will be found only on their boxes.. 'RBD' is found on PPs and a few PPKs acquired by the Reichsbahndirektionen (state railway network), often accompanied by the depot name in full, e.g. Halle, Münster or Stuttgart. 'R.F.V.' is found on PPs and PPKs acquired by the Reichsfinanzverwaltung (state treasury), though these are sometimes mistakenly identified with the Reichsförstverwaltung (forestry service). 'R.J.' is found on *Polizei-Pistolen* used to arm court-guards and prisoner escorts under the aegis of the Reichsjustizministerium (ministry of justice). 'RZM', encircled, denotes the Reichszeugmeisterei (state material control office), which accepted PPs and PPKs for all the groups affiliated with the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party). 'RRZ' may be found on *Polizei-Pistolen* issued to personnel of the Reichsrundfunkzentrale (state radio service). 'S.A.' or, more rarely, 'S.A. der N.S.D.A.P.' identifies SA (*Sturm Abteilung*, assault detachment) pistols which may also have an inventory mark on the front-grip strap, or the name of the *SA-Gruppe* in full – e.g. 'SA der NSDAP' over 'Gruppe Thüringen'.

To conclude with inspectors' marks, police eagle-and-swastika marks are usually accompanied by a letter – 'C' or 'F' on Walthers –

PPKs issued to the RSHA (SS) had the 'K' suffix below the serial number. Production continued until the end of World War II, when PPK serial numbers had reached the low 430000 block and continued with an 'A' suffix. The highest known serial numbers are 431115K and 433521A for the PPK, compared with 399990P for a standard *Polizei-Pistole*.

Fritz Walther's success at the expense of his rivals had been assured when the PPK became the *Ehrenwaffe des Politischen Leiters* ('presentation weapon of the political leadership'). The RZM mark lay on the left side of the slide, immediately ahead of the safety-catch thumbpiece. This required a special marking die, as the lettering had to be condensed to accommodate the RZM mark. Pistols delivered after February 1938 had special brown plastic grips, on which a displayed eagle, grasping an entwined swastika, looks to its left. Most of these pistols are numbered after 172001K, but purchases continued even after production for the German armed forces had been prioritized. PPKs with *Parteileiter* ('Party leader') grips bearing low serial numbers are either fakes or were subsequently embellished by their owners.

Ironically, because the Walther company could only produce a comparatively limited number, demand for *Polizei-Pistolen* soon

which proved, despite many claims to the contrary, to be the principal inspector's mark. Inspector 'C' accepted PPs numbered below about 350000P and PPKs below 410000; inspector 'F' then replaced 'C', continuing to approve pistols numbered as high as 375000P and

430000K. The mark of the principal Waffenamt (weapons agency) inspector supervising the Zella-Mehlis sub-bureau, whose personal number was 359, will be found beneath tiny stylized eagle marks on *Polizei-Pistolen* accepted for military service.



The Walther family's close ties with the NSDAP assured that the PPK was adopted as the *Ehrenwaffe des Politischen Leiters*. This pistol – no. 829787, shown with its original Anuschat-style AKAH (Albrecht Kind GmbH) holster – dates from 1935. The eagle-and-swastika motif on the grips and the RZM mark on the left side of the slide characterize this pattern, though many otherwise-standard pistols will be found with *Parteileiter* ('Party leader') grips subsequently fitted by their owners. (Amoskeag Auctions, www.amoskeagauction.com)

outstripped supply, and in doing so assured the success of competitors such as the Mauser HSc and Sauer 38H.

Presentation *Polizei-Pistolen*

Some pistols, usually from pre-war production, were specially finished; some were nickel-plated, others were matt-chromed, and a few were even etched or engraved for special presentation. Gold plating and inlaying, gilding and silver finishing were also occasionally used, although the vast majority of pistols were quite standard. A few even had experimental grey phosphate finishes.

Walther PPs and PPKs were among the most popular of the many pistols presented by or to high-ranking military and NSDAP officials. This was at least partly due to the adoption of the PPK as the *Ehrenwaffe des Politischen Leiters*, but also to links between individual members of the Walther family and the NSDAP. An ornate pistol bearing 'Ehrengabe der Familien Walther' ('honorary gift from the Walther families') on the left side of the slide was presented to Adolf Hitler in 1939, in celebration of his 50th birthday. On 30 April 1945, Hitler swallowed a cyanide capsule and shot himself with a PPK, but the birthday-gift pistol was subsequently found in his Munich flat.





German police encounter a looter, summer 1944 (previous pages)

In a German city reduced to rubble by Allied bombing, two policemen confront a looter absconding with a valuable painting. The Ordnungspolizei (uniformed police) man fires his Walther P 38 at the looter, while his Kriminalpolizei (plainclothes police) colleague shelters behind a wall while reloading his PPK. The looter has responded by firing a Luger in the direction of his adversaries.

Walthers were conferred on individual recipients by men such as Heinrich Himmler and Fritz Sauckel. Though some of the surviving pistols are in comparatively poor condition, they all show evidence of high-quality engraving and extensive use of gold-plating.

A common error is the 'factory engraving' attribution of all PPs and PPKs. Within the Zella-Mehlis factory, however, the engraving department was not only minuscule but also dealt principally with hunting rifles. Engraving work on pistols was customarily subcontracted to local craftsmen, the 1939 edition of the *Deutsches Reichs-Adressbuch* listing Friedrich and Wilhelm Schilling in Suhl and Franz and Otto Zöller in Zella-Mehlis among others. Small batches of pistols, unhardened, were set aside for the purpose. Consequently, dates of production and of decoration may not necessarily be the same.

Polizei-Pistolen in the export market before 1945

In addition to steadily growing commercial sales, *Polizei-Pistolen* had been exported prior to 1940 to **Brazil**, where as many as 2,500 PPs with butt-heel magazine catches served the São Paulo police for many years. Other PPs and PPKs went to **Chile** (no. 108037P, with pre-1940 'crown/N' proof



On 6 May 1945, the ornate gold-plated PPK no. 408111K was surrendered by Hermann Göring, head of the Luftwaffe, to 1st Lieutenant Jerome Shapiro of the US Army's 142nd Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon. Influential in the creation of the Krieghoff Luger, Göring also owned oakleaf-engraved gold-plated PPK no. 210975K, with his family arms on the grip. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)



marks, has 'EJERCITO DE CHILE' on the slide), Czechoslovakia and Estonia, usually for police units. In Denmark the Rigspolitiet bought a substantial quantity of 7.65mm PPKs in this period, the lowest authenticated serial number being 987846, though evidence is to some extent compromised by the use of a variety of war-surplus PPs and PPKs after 1945.

About 200 PPKs were sold to Lithuania in 1937, including no. 955892 and no. 956680. They have what is often misidentified as an angular crown on the right side of the slide, but is actually a traditional motif known as the 'Pillars of Gediminid', which served as an Army emblem. Norway used guns with *Politi* (Police) marks and often a distinctive property mark. Persia acquired more than 9,000 *Polizei-Pistolen* in 1939–40, numbered between 116000P and 173500P, with the state crest and a Farsi inscription reading 'state police' on the left side of the slide. A later batch split Walther's Zella-Mehlis marks so that the company name lies on the right of the slide instead of the left.

Some PPKs went to Poland in 1939, these being distinguished by a 'G/2' acceptance mark in an oval cartouche. In Sweden the police, acting through agent J.V. Aström, acquired *Polizei-Pistolen* numbered from about 137100P upward, while others, including some PPKs, were purchased in 1942–44 on behalf of the Statens Vattenfallswerk (state-owned power-generating operation), and are marked accordingly.

Switzerland bought *Polizei-Pistolen* for cantonal and state police, and many others were sold commercially by well-known retailers such as Waffen Glaser of Zürich. Turkey acquired PPs for Army officers' use in 1939.

Supplied in 1939, Turkish-contract *Polizei-Pistolen* (above) had butt-heel magazine catches and bore distinctive markings on the right side of the slide, including the star-and-crescent and 'TC' monogram (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*; Turkish Republic). 'Subaylara mahsustur' ('for officer's use only') is also found on some of the Lugers acquired at much the same time. The rarely seen Persian-contract *Polizei-Pistole* (below) has a magazine release on the heel of the butt, and a lion-in-sunburst crest on the left side of the slide between inscriptions in Farsi and the date '1317'. This pistol, factory serial number 120059P dating from 1939, also has issue number 1053 on the frame behind the trigger. Walther's name, usually on the left, has been displaced to the right side of the slide. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

SWEDISH HEERES-PISTOLEN

Though Lugers were acquired by the Swedes in the late 1930s from Mauser to replace the venerable m/07 Brownings, the acquisitions were seen as an expedient while trials to find a better long-term solution were undertaken. Tests favoured the Walther *Heeres-Pistole*, which beat the FN-Browning GP Mle 35 and the Finnish L/35 Lahti to be adopted as the '9mm automatiska pistol m/39'. Two batches of Walthers were duly purchased through the Widforss sporting-goods store in 1940 in a bid to maintain Sweden's neutrality, the earlier group with 'crown/N' proof marks and the latter displaying 'eagle/N' proof marks. The Swedish

pistols had chequered black-plastic grips and lanyard loops set in circular instead of rectangular seats. Serial numbers have been observed to range from H1060 to H2062, and unit marks in the form '17. No 25' – denoting the 25th pistol issued in 17. Bohuslans Infanteriregiment – may lie on the upper left side of the slide. The onset of World War II prevented the Swedish authorities from acquiring not only more Walthers but also, owing to the German occupation of Belgium, any FN-Brownings. Consequently, the L/35 Lahti, which had placed third in the original trials, had to be adopted for service.

THE P 38 IN WORLD WAR II

When World War II began in September 1939, the P 08 – the Luger or Parabellum – remained the only regulation handgun in Wehrmacht service. Indeed, on 1 April 1938, Mauser-Werke had been given a contract for 207,014 Lugers: 114,000 for the Heer and the Waffen-SS, and 93,014 for the Luftwaffe (including anti-aircraft troops). An inventory taken in September 1940 revealed that the Heer had 552,962 handguns, almost all of which were P 08s; the Luftwaffe had 186,000 P 08s; and the Kriegsmarine had 12,914 P 08s and 23,042 small-calibre Mauser blowback pistols.

In September 1939, the P 08 was issued to Heer NCOs as a badge of rank, and often also to artillerymen, machine-gunners and specialist troops for whom the 7.92mm Kar 98k rifle was an encumbrance. Wehrmacht officers were expected to provide their own personal-defence weapons, something which in itself can link unusual gun-types with military service, but could also purchase sidearms issued to them prior to being commissioned. Lugers seem to have been the most commonly treated handguns in this way, but not in large numbers. In addition, in 1938, a law had been passed forcing the civilian population to surrender any firearms for which they could not demonstrate need. One effect of this edict was the impressment of a wide range of handguns into service, many gaining legitimately applied WaA inspectors' marks. Officers' handguns often prove to be small-calibre blowback pistols exemplified by the *Polizei-Pistolen*. One problem was the use of non-military cartridges, though the 7.65mm Browning, in particular, would be shared with many handguns taken from men who had been captured as the Germans conquered much of Europe.

Luftwaffe issue of the P 38 would be comparatively small, but the rapid enlargement of the air force – which was also responsible for anti-aircraft units – made more demands on P 08 production than Krieghoff could answer, and so large numbers of smaller handguns were obtained. Concerned by the loss of aircrew during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, Hitler ordered that only a single officer should be aboard each aircraft. Pilots often ranked as senior NCOs, therefore, and were issued with Lugers. The situation subsequently changed when realization dawned that



Concentrating resources on the German arms industry meant that consumer goods became not only expensive but also increasingly scarce before World War II began, and items brought out of France after 1940 answered problems only in the short term. By 1943, therefore, output of consumer goods was declining greatly even though the authorities still tried to persuade the German people that all was well with the Reich. Commercial *Heeres-Pistolen* show variety comparable to that evident in the Walther pistols destined for German military issue. The earliest batches had concealed extractors and rectangular-head firing pins, but exposed extractors had certainly appeared by pistol no. 4000. The rectangular-head firing pin was replaced by a cylindrical variety and the resulting style continued until small numbers of hybrid P 38/*Heeres-Pistolen* were made towards the end of the war. The perfected *Heeres-Pistolen* and the P 38 were virtually identical, apart from finish, slide markings, grip materials, and the shape of their lanyard rings. Commercial-type P 38 no. 24264 has brown Bakelite grips and the copper-colour frame found on perhaps 1,500–2,000 of these pistols made towards the end of the war. It is suspected that problems occurred with the blueing process, but that the deteriorating military situation forced acceptance. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

officers were treated better if captured, and thereafter all pilots were commissioned.

The value of the blowback pistols is clear when considering the cramped cockpits of single-seat fighters such as the Bf 109 and Fw 190 and even medium bombers such as the Dornier Do 17 and Junkers Ju 88, the relatively small crew compartments of which had to accommodate four men. The need to stow parachutes, life-jackets and many other items put a premium on handguns which could be carried in as small a holster as possible, in a pocket or even in a boot-top. The same was true of tanks, armoured cars and many other military vehicles, and so double-action blowback pistols of this type with provenance are by no means unknown – not all of them served the Luftwaffe.

The reputation of the Luftwaffe's *Fallschirmjäger* (paratroops) was largely destroyed by the airborne invasion of Crete in the summer of 1942. Comparatively few Walthers had reached paratroopers by the time of the operation, photographs confirming that, to ensure commonality of ammunition, the P 08 was generally carried. Though several paratroop units had been raised by 1945, Hitler forbade large-scale airborne assaults after the costly battle for Crete and most of the paratroopers ended the war fighting as infantrymen.

Kriegsmarine (Navy) handguns came in two basic classes: those issued officially and carried in shipboard armouries, and those that had been purchased by individuals. Kriegsmarine pistols ranged from Lugers of various kinds to 7.65mm Mauser M1934 and HSc blowback pistols, usually bearing the Kriegsmarine's 'eagle/M' inspection marks. As World War II ran its course, reliance on a surface fleet rapidly depleted by the loss of major warships such as *Admiral Graf Spee*, *Bismarck* and *Scharnhorst*, gave way to concentration on U-boat warfare. During this period, traditional reliance on the Kar 98k rifle and the P 08 pistol gave way to the firepower of the 9mm MP 40 submachine gun.

The P 38 officially replaced the P 08 on 26 April 1940, to be issued together with the Pistolentasche 38 (holster) and the Pistolengurt 38 für

Berittene (pistol-belt for mounted troops). Even so, production capacity and demand would prove to be incompatible even though additional contractors were employed. Lugers were made until 1942 and thereafter assembled in small numbers until the end of World War II. The P 38 was a better manufacturing prospect than the P 08, but its mechanism contained more parts: about 57 or 58, depending on the design of the grips, compared with 54, with 17 of the P 38's components concentrated in the firing mechanism, compared with only ten in the P 08. Even so, efficiency and versatility more than compensated for this complexity.

The P 38 cost half as much to manufacture as a P 08, as the Walther pistol had been designed for mass production. Yet the design and construction of the P 38, which included several stamped parts, were criticized in some circles even though the Luger – the yardstick by which the P 38 was initially judged – was notoriously expensive and difficult to manufacture.

Walther's judicious use of stampings and coiled-wire springs kept costs down: it was pointless wasting valuable machine time, effort and expense performing unnecessary or purely cosmetic operations on items the function of which scarcely depended on their appearance. In some instances, notably the steel slide cover, a stamping proved to be more durable than a conventional machining; and springs made from coiled wire were invariably more efficient than the most elegant, carefully made riband type.

Acceleration of production, particularly once Mauser and Spreewerke had been recruited to boost Walther's output, enabled large numbers of P 38s to reach the front line. Even so, they never entirely replaced the venerable Luger and the many *Behelfspistolen* (substitute pistols), such as the FN-Browning GP Mle 35 and the wz.35 Radom, that had been impressed to make good not only the expansion in numbers of military personnel but also horrendous combat losses.

Into production

The perfected P 38, together with commercial *Heeres-Pistolen*, seems to have begun to appear in quantity either late in 1938 or at the beginning of 1939, despite the fact that the design had been settled by April 1938. Doubt remains about the precise date. Revisions to German proof laws were first implemented on 1 April 1940 and it is evident from earlier proof marks that at least 1,000 *Heeres-Pistolen* had been made by then. (The military P 38s, of course, did not bear commercial proofs and thus offer no data.) An alternative chronology offered in 1961 by Marvin Lessen is clearly too optimistic, with *Heeres-Pistolen* production beginning in 1937.

HWaA department Wa-Prüf 2 began large-scale trials of the P 38 on 1 April 1939, requesting at least 800 pistols; deliveries began in August and 1,470 had been accepted by Wa-Prüf 2 by the end of the year.

The first Heer P 38s, a test series of 50 or perhaps 100, seem to have been delivered to the HWaA in 1939 at a time when commercial-production pistols were being despatched to Sweden. Pistol 01 has a



Walther exposed-extractor
O-series P 38 no. 06308 dates
from 1940. (Morphy Auctions,
www.morphyauctions.com)

simple slide marking of a company banner in front of 'P.38'; the serial number appears on the left side of the slide, behind the designation, and on the left side of the frame. The serial number was also stamped on the original barrel, which has since been replaced. The chequered-walnut grips are of *Heeres-Pistole* pattern, the firing pin is the rectangular-head retractable type and the extractor is concealed in the slide.

Pistol 018 is similar, but the last two digits of the serial number are repeated on various parts including the front-sight blade, the dismantling lever and the slide-retaining (or hold-open) catch. This is unusual in so far as Walther pistols are concerned, being associated more with the Luger and other earlier German small arms. The main serial numbers of pistol 018 have been given an 'a' suffix, the significance of which has not yet been explained.

Pistols 01 and 018 bear inspectors' marks applied by WaA 359, based in Zella-Mehlis. Unfortunately, neither pistol has been available for detailed analysis and so, apart from superficial features which are immediately obvious, it is not known in what respects they deviate from later P 38s – nor what relationship they bear to the contemporary *Heeres-Pistolen*. It is clear that the latter existed in several varieties: the first batch of perhaps 1,000, a second experimental short mass-production run (many of which went to Sweden) and a perfected version marketed after 1 April 1940.

The design of the locked-breech Walther pistol was gradually finalized until, by January 1940, series production could be planned. Work was to begin in February, with the expectation that, by June 1940, 3,000 pistols could be delivered monthly. The first 1,500 P 38s had retractable rectangular-head firing pins and concealed extractors, but both features were subsequently abandoned. Each had apparently been deleted before issue began in February 1940. The concealed extractor disappeared in the region of P 38 no. 01500, and a new cylindrical-head firing pin had been adopted by P 38 no. 04500.

Military production of the P 38 seems to have begun on a small scale in Walther's Zella-Mehlis factory late in 1939. By April 1940, about

Walther '480'-code P 38 no. 768 of the first or no-suffix series was also made in 1940. Note the duplication of the serial number and the code on the slide and frame. (Rock Island Auctions, www.rockislandauctions.com)



5,000 P 38s had been supplied to the Wehrmacht. By the end of August 1940, about 13,000 P 38s had been produced in the 0-prefix series. The HWaA then allocated Walther the code '480'; serial numbers recommenced at 1 and the slide marking became 'P.38 480' and the serial number in one widely spaced line. The code number was often repeated on the left side of the trigger guard where it joined the frame.

The numerical code was replaced by 'ac' at the end of September 1940, after a little over 7,000 P 38s had been made (the highest reported '480' serial number is 7131). The 'ac' group was initially applied to P 38s made between the termination of '480' production in late September 1940 and the middle of November, serial numbers reaching at least 5631a after completion of the no-suffix block.

The slides of the first 'ac' P 38s displayed 'P.38 ac' and the serial number in a single line. The numbers, proofs and WaA 359 inspectors' marks remained unchanged from the previous sub-variants, and the code group was invariably repeated on the left side of the trigger guard where it joined the frame. Towards the end of 1940, the slide legend was altered to include the date and subsequently contained 'P.38' and 'ac' over '40', then the serial number.

The change occurred in the region of serial number 5000a, but older P 38s sometimes received additional dates before being delivered to the Wehrmacht. It is suspected that only those that were still in the factory, and slides which had been stockpiled to await assembly, were given supplementary dates when the system changed; and, therefore, that the only P 38s to be so treated were scattered in the 3500a–5000a block and a few stragglers from earlier groups that had been retained for repair.

The distinctive application of the '40' date-mark to previously undated 'ac' P 38s looked odd, as the new figures were added below the base line of the manufacturer's code letters. P 38s numbered above 5000a were marked with a new one-piece code/date die, struck sufficiently higher on the slide for it to share the base line of the remainder of the inscription.

MARKS FOUND ON THE P 38

In terms of makers' marks, the first Walther-made P 38s simply bore the banner trademark immediately ahead of 'P.38', but this was replaced first by '480' and then by 'ac' (above the date prior to 1943 and then in line with it). Mauser-Werke used 'byf' and then, at the end of the war, 'svv'. Spreewerke was allocated 'cyq', though a broken die has led to the misidentification of 'cvq'. Individual components, often subcontracted, may be found with the 'fnh' of Böhmisches Waffenfabrik of Prague or 'jvd' of Erste Nordböhmisches Waffenfabrik of Niederinsiedel.

The commercial proof marks of the *Heeres-Pistole* were replaced by military test stamps in the form of a displayed eagle atop an encircled swastika. These appeared on the right side of the slide (generally flanked by two WaA inspectors' marks), on the left side of the barrel block and on the left side of the locking piece. Additional WaA inspectors' stamps were to be found on the left side of the frame above the trigger, on the left side of the slide-retaining catch, on the left side of the trigger, on the right side of the barrel block, on the right side of the locking piece, on the stamped slide cover, on the upper back part of the magazine body and on most of the minor parts large enough to take them. Numbers accompanying WaA inspectors' marks will also identify the source: '76' for Böhmisches Waffenfabrik's Prague factory, '88' for Spreewerke, '135' for Mauser's Oberndorf factory, '140' for Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre in Herstal, '359' for Walther's Zella-Mehlis factory and '706' for Erste Nordböhmisches Waffenfabrik.

The first Walther-made P 38s had 0-prefix serial numbers on the left side of the slide in front of the safety lever recess, on the left

side of the frame behind the dismantling lever and on the front of the barrel block. The last three digits were repeated on the locking piece, and all or part of the serial number was often stamped on the magazine base. Thereafter, Walther-made handguns were marked in a cyclical numbering system in which blocks of 10,000 were distinguished by additional letter suffixes. Thus, P 38 no. 9876f was the 69,876th to be made, having been preceded by one block without a suffix letter and the 'a' to 'e' groups. Though claims have often been made to the contrary, the 'j' suffix was used, which meant that there was a total of 27 suffix-groups (no suffix, 'a' to 'z'). Mauser serial numbers lay higher on the slide than their Walther equivalents, in line with the thumbpiece of the safety lever when it was in its uppermost position. The numbers do not seem to have been reduced to 1 at the end of each calendar year. The first alphabet series (1942–44) used distinctive cursive suffix letters but the second series reverted to plain sans-serif type.

Property and unit marks may also be present. Walther-made P 38s were acquired by the police, perhaps 1,000 being delivered in 1943–44. Their serial numbers lacked suffix letters, so either they were in a special sequence or they were delivered from January production in each year. The former seems the preferable explanation. Commercial proof marks appeared on the left side of the slides, on the right side of the barrel blocks and on the right side of the locking pieces, while 'eagle/L' graced the right side of the slides. Markings indicating the exact calibre of the barrel, between 8.80mm and 8.85mm, lay on the left side of the barrel blocks.



Walther P 38 'ac' over '41' no. 6782c is shown with two details of its markings. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

Problems inevitably encountered with any new weapon, including creating a production line and training the workforce, persisted until November 1940. By the end of the year, however, 24,480 P 38s had been made. By then, when the 'b'-suffix block had been all but completed, Walther reduced the serial numbers to 1, changed the date and continued to make P 38s coded 'ac' over '41' until the end of a year in which the high-quality polished blue finish was discontinued. There was also a gradual reduction in the frequency of inspectors' marks, which had been struck into virtually every part in 1940 but were less diligently applied in 1941 – and omitted, wherever possible, from 1942 onwards. Hans Reckendorf (1978) quoted official documents showing that deliveries of P 38s amounted to 110,295, including 100,295 P 38s for the Heer and 10,000 for the Luftwaffe, the 'k'-suffix block being reached by 31 December 1941; contrary to some claims, the 'j'-suffix block had actually been used.

Production expands

The HWaA soon realized that Walther's facilities alone could not satisfy the demand for P 38s and so Mauser-Werke, then making Lugers in Oberndorf, was ordered to begin tooling for the P 38 in the early summer of 1941. At much the same time, efforts to make P 38s in what had been Czechoslovakia began. Details are unclear, but it seems that Böhmsche Waffenfabrik AG (the former Zbrojovka Brno factory) and Spreewerke GmbH, then making artillery parts in Grottau, were approached. Both companies each delivered 100 P 38s in June–July 1942, but a decision seems to have been taken to allow only Spreewerke to continue work. It is assumed that Böhmsche Waffenfabrik's facilities were better used making machine guns. In 1942, Walther continued to make P 38s marked in the same way as those delivered at the end of 1941, except that the '42' date was used. Hans Reckendorf records that 130,040 P 38s were produced in 1942.

Mauser-Werke production of the Luger had ceased by June 1942, though assembly continued until 1945. The first P 38s were assembled

Soviet forces capture a German pilot, summer 1942 (opposite)

There are many reports of German airmen surrendering handguns to their captors. The author's father was involved in the destruction of a Messerschmitt Bf 110 attacking Manston airfield in July 1940. A 'small streamlined pistol', suspected to have been a Mauser HSc, was retrieved from the pilot's body, while the navigator/gunner, who had been thrown clear during the crash and suffered little more than a sprained ankle, apparently surrendered a P 08. Here, a Soviet partisan, armed with a P 38 and a PPSH-41 submachine gun, guards a female sniper carrying a Mosin-Nagant M91/30 rifle and holding a Finnish knife to the throat of their German captive. The German, the pilot of a crashed Messerschmitt Bf 109F of II./JG 54 *Grunherz*, is surrendering his Walther PP to his captors, butt-first. The Soviet authorities turned many Walthers against their erstwhile owners, a large 'X' on the slide or frame denoting refurbishment.



The P 38 in use on the Eastern Front in 1942. The P 38-wielding *Stabsgefreiter* (lance-corporal) on the right, with a standard hard-shell holster (Pistolentasche 38) on his belt, also carries a slung Kar 98k rifle and an MG 34 machine gun over his shoulder. (Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo/ Alamy Stock Photo)

OPPOSITE

These German soldiers are armed with a Polish wz.35 Radom (foreground) and a Walther P 38. As the fighting grew ever more desperate, the German authorities acquired large numbers of commercial-type pistols such as the PP and PPK, the HSc and the Sauer 38H to serve alongside a variety of pistols seized in Belgium, Czechoslovakia and other occupied territories. Production of pistols such as the FN-Brownings and the Radom continued, while a variant of the 37M service pistol was made in Hungary as the P 37(u). By 31 December 1942, the Heer was using the P 08 and P 38, the M1934 and HSc Mausers, the Walther PP and PPK, the Sauer 38H, and a variety of Czechoslovakian, Polish and Belgian impressments – the Czech P 27(t) (vz.27) and P 39(t) (vz.39); the Polish P 35(p) (wz.35 Radom); and the FN-Browning P 640(b) (Model 10) and P 641(b) (Model 22) – plus the Spanish Astra 600. The Luftwaffe had the same German-made pistols, though the impressments were restricted to the P 39(t), the Hungarian-made P 37(u) and the FN-Browning P 626(b) (GP 35). The Kriegsmarine had only the P 08, the Mauser M1934 and the P 35(p). (Author's archives)



in Oberndorf late in September 1942. Inspected by personnel of WaA 135 (Oberndorf), the first batch, said to have numbered only 700, was delivered to the Wehrmacht that December. The left side of their slides bore 'P.38', the code/date group 'byf' over '42' and the serial number. The full serial number was repeated on the left side of the frame, behind and below the dismantling catch, and on the front of the barrel block. The last three digits were stamped into the underside of the locking piece.

Large-scale deliveries of Mauser P 38s to the German armed forces then began, and the middle of the 'a'-suffix block had been reached by the end of the year, the highest serial number yet reported being 4994a. Consequently, about 15,000 P 38s appear to have been produced with the 'byf' over '42' code/date group. The first Mauser P 38s had slides with a semi-matte black finish, but later examples were conventionally blued. Ribbed plastic grips were standard.



Making ever-increasing use of subcontracted parts, Walther, marking slides with 'ac' over '43', reached at least serial number 7923n by the end of 1943 – production totalling 136,000. Some of the P 38s produced in the last days of December 1943 used the monoline 'ac 43' code/date die that had replaced the two-line pattern.

Mausers' code/date die changed to 'byf' over '43', continuing the numerical sequence begun in 1942. It has been suggested that the date stamps changed at the end of each financial year, on 1 October rather than 1 January 1943, but statistical analysis does not support this contention. It seems that about 145,000 P 38s were made for the Wehrmacht in 1943, from about serial number 5000a to the 'p'-suffix block, together with very small numbers of P 38s for the police.

The serial numbers of the police-issue P 38s lay in a separate no-suffix block, at least 1,125 and perhaps as many as 1,500 pistols being delivered towards the end of 1943. They had 'eagle/N' proof marks on the left side of the slide below the extractor and on the left side of the barrel block. Military inspectors' marks were absent from the earliest of the pistols, though not from some later ones, and 'eagle/F' or 'eagle/L' proof marks were stamped into the right side of the slide above the trigger.



One of the first Spreewerke P 38s to be delivered to the Wehrmacht, no. 271 of the no-suffix series, shown with its first-type holster, probably dates from November 1943. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

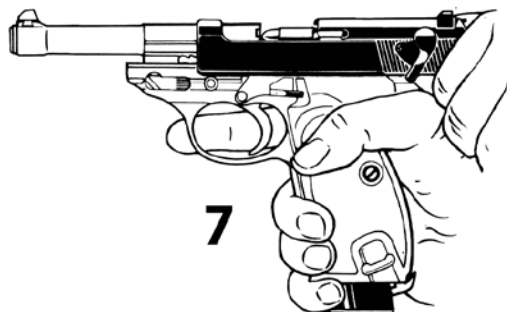
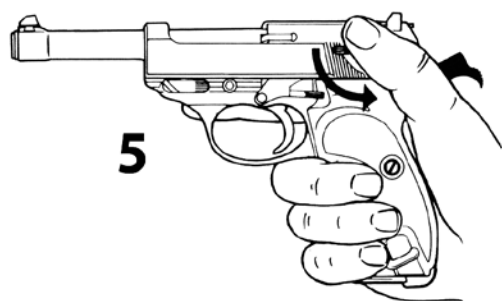
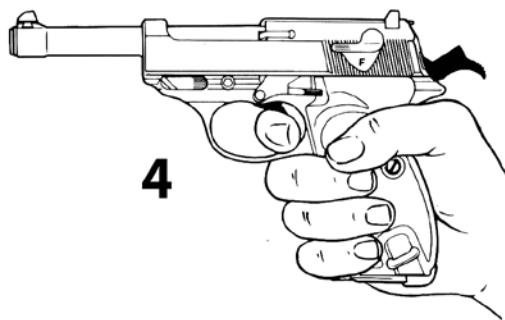
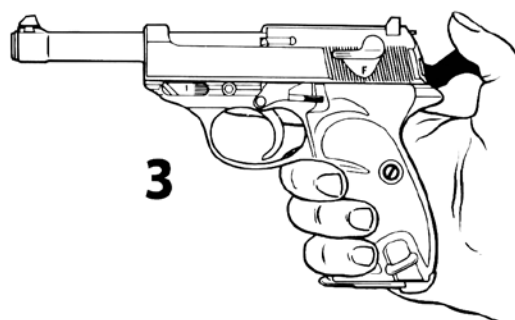
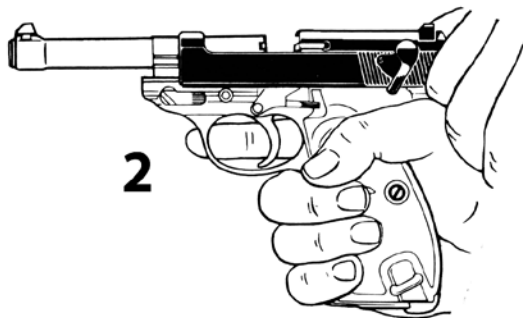
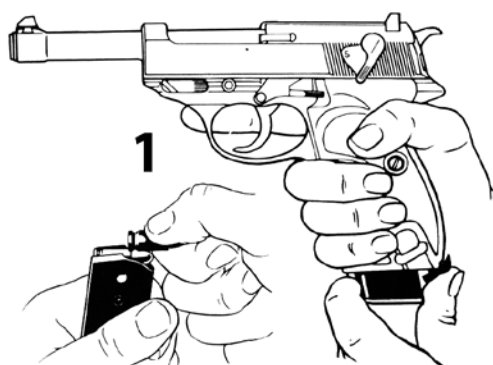
USING THE P 38 (OPPOSITE)

Beginning with an empty magazine, the catch on the heel of the butt is pressed to allow the magazine to drop free (1). A new magazine can then be inserted and pressed home until the catch engages. The slide can be retracted (2) and released to chamber a cartridge. Once the safety catch has been released, the pistol can be fired either by cocking the hammer manually (3) or pulling through on the trigger (4). When the hammer is cocked, applying the safety catch (5) blocks the firing pin and drops the hammer into its rest position. When the last shot has been fired and the spent cartridge case has been ejected, the slide is held open. Replacing the magazine and pressing the slide catch (6) allows the slide to close, chambering a round and leaving the hammer cocked. To unload the pistol (7), the magazine can be dropped by a finger's width and the slide cycled to eject the chambered round. (Author)

Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre began tooling for P 38 components in Herstal-léz-Liège in August 1943. When the FN factory was recaptured by the Allies in September 1944, 4,720 frames and 2,272 slides – according to the first count – were discovered among large quantities of lesser parts. Yet there is no evidence that Fabrique Nationale assembled complete pistols. Not only was a production line conspicuously absent from the factory when it was seized by the Allies, but the few completed P 38s found in the plant were either wholly German made, supplied to guide tooling, or standard German frames fitted with FN slides to check compatibility. FN's products were accepted by personnel of WaA 140 (Herstal), commanded by Oberleutnant (W) Zorn. There were several different subdivisions, as the company manufactured a wide range of goods; the pistol department was Abteilung 505, while proof-shooting was undertaken by Abteilung 357.

Spreewerke, which had been manufacturing artillery equipment, was also making the P 38. Though it has been claimed that tooling began only in May 1943, it seems that 300 P 38s were delivered in August 1942, followed by 550 in September, 1,100 in October, 2,000 in November and 3,000 in December. Installation of the Grottau production line is believed to have been supervised by technicians from Mauser's Oberndorf factory, who returned to Württemberg once production was under way.

Spreewerke attained by far the highest production rate – sometimes exceeding 25,000 pistols per month – but the quality was generally poor. The company had little previous experience of small-arms manufacture in





This Mauser-made 'byf 44' P 38 mixes slide no. 6052a and frame no. 7744I, cannibalization being by no means uncommon during the closing stages of World War II when virtually anything that was safe to shoot was pressed into service. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

which minute tolerances had to be maintained, and the P 38s often display blemishes, suggesting that milling machines were being operated with too high a feed-rate to obtain a smooth surface.

The left side of the slides bore 'P.38', 'cyq' and the serial number. The pistols were not dated and their serial numbers were in a continuous cyclical system without reverting to 1 at the beginning of each calendar year. The serial numbers were repeated on the left side of the frame below and behind the dismantling lever, and on front of the barrel block. The last three digits were stamped on the underside of the locking piece.

Military proof marks lay on the right side of the slide between the HWaA inspectors' marks, on the left side of the barrel block and on the left side of the locking piece. WaA marks were struck twice on the right side of the slide, on the left side of the frame above the trigger, on the left side of the barrel block, on the right side of the locking piece and usually on the back of the magazine.

Spreewerke's Waffenamt sub-bureau number, 88, was presumably applied by inspectors based in Spandau. Post-war Czech sources state, however, that 3,000 P 38s were assembled from parts found in a former Spreewerke factory at Hradkoú-nad-Nisou in northern Bohemia, and some assembly had clearly taken place outside Germany. This may also explain why so many Spreewerke products used parts made by Czechoslovakian subcontractors including barrels, stamped slide-retaining catches and special widely serrated hammers made by Prague-based Böhmisches Waffenfabrik, bearing the code group 'fnh' and inspected by WaA 76. Erste Nordböhmisches Waffenfabrik of Niederinsiedel made magazines coded 'jvd' and accepted by WaA 706.



At the beginning of January 1944, Walther's serial numbers reverted to 1 and slide markings became 'P.38', 'ac 44' and the serial number in a straight line. A few P 38s may be encountered with two-line ('ac' over '44') code/date marks, but their slides – and a few frames – were made by Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre despite their Walther markings, and bore inspectors' stamps applied by WaA 140 rather than WaA 359. Walther produced about 115,000 P 38s in 1944, their serial numbers running up to at least 41311. There were also several thousand FN/Walther/Mauser hybrids, but these have been included in Mauser's production totals.

On 1 January 1944, Mauser's code/date group changed to 'byf' over '44' and production continued. At about the same time, the WaA 135 inspectors' stamp changed from an eagle over '135' to an eagle over 'WaA 135'. As no deliveries were made prior to the last day of September 1942, so far as is known, the P 38s being made at the end of September 1944 would have been numbered in the mid 'x'-suffix block and the last 'z'-suffix P 38 would have been made in the third or last week of November.

Small numbers of police-issue P 38s were also made by Mauser in 1944, these pistols being blued overall and bearing commercial proof marks in addition to 'eagle/L' or 'eagle/F' police stamps. The pistols bore the 'byf' over '44' code/date group, but their serial numbers continued the sequence begun in 1943, the reported range being 1603–4589. Most of the pistols numbered above 4500 had the duotone finish – weakly blued barrel and phosphated slide – introduced in November 1944 at about the time Mauser began a second alphabet series using suffix letters in sans-serif rather than cursive type. Stamped sheet-steel grips were perfected in this period, but did not become widespread until early in 1945.

Numbered separately from suffix-block military production, Mauser-made 'byf 44' P 38 no. 4419 was delivered to the police in 1944: an 'eagle/F' lies alongside the WaA 135 (Oberndorf) inspector's mark on the right side. (Rock Island Auctions, www.rockislandauctions.com)

The war's final months

Walther's 'ac' code was retained during the last few months of World War II, until the arrival of the Third US Army brought production to a halt. Parts of the factory had been assigned the manufacture of ultra-simple *Volksgewehre* ('people's rifles') for Volkssturm ('people's assault') home-defence units and, as there was a shortage of raw materials, serial numbers had only reached the low 'd'-suffix block. This suggests that no more than about 41,000 P 38s had been assembled between 1 January and 12 April 1945.

There was simply no time to repair and modify the defective P 38s that had been taken off the production lines, and the frequency of errors increased greatly during the last few weeks of the hostilities. Consequently, some serial numbers between 1d and 1000d probably never existed on service weapons – and many P 38s 'cannibalized' in the 'c'-suffix block, for example, were accepted with mismatching serial numbers.

Several thousand P 38s seem to have been assembled by Mauser with Walther-marked slides, made in Belgium by Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre. These have two-line 'ac' over '44' code/date marks, 'd'-suffix serial numbers such as 2530d set higher on the slide than Walther equivalents, and WaA 135 and WaA 140 (Herstal) inspectors' marks. The Oberndorf markings, taking post-November 1944 'eagle over WaA 135' form, will be found on the frame while the Herstal marks lie on the slides.

The serial numbers, assumed to have been part of Mauser's regular second alphabet series, seem to date production to January or February 1945. The slides had probably been shipped to the nearest agency shortly before the Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre factory was recaptured by the Allies in September 1944. Mauser may also have needed extra slides to address a surfeit of frames.

Use of Mauser's date/code group 'byf' over '44' may have continued into the first weeks of 1945, as the coding did not change until the low 'e'-suffix block. The highest known 'byf 44' serial number is 2996e. The average monthly production rate in 1943–44 – about 13,000 – suggests that production should have reached serial numbers 5000b–7000b in the second series, or perhaps 5000c–7000c if the no-suffix block was omitted from the second alphabet series. If this is true, and assuming that no rapid acceleration in production took place, serial number 3000e in the second series would not have been reached until February or March 1945.

By January 1945, Spreewerke had begun the 'z'-suffix block of the first alphabet series. Midway through the block, the tail of the 'y' in the code/date die broke away and a few P 38s were made with what appeared to be a 'cvq' mark. This, of course, has led to the erroneous identification of two different Spreewerke codes. The defective die was soon replaced and later P 38s bore the correct 'cyq' stamping.

Once the first alphabet series had been completed, the serial numbers recommenced at a01 and another sequence began. How many P 38s were marked in this fashion (or, indeed, how far the blocks continued) is not known. Most estimates place the end of production in the middle of a 'b'-prefix block.

THE P 38 IN ALLIED HANDS

German forces generally approved of the P 38, as did Allied soldiers who captured them. It was said that Lugers made the best souvenirs, but that the P 38 was far better to use. Though the P 38 was complicated, the double-action trigger allowed first shots to be taken without preparation other than releasing the safety catch, if applied, and follow-up shots were immediate. Reloading was particularly easy if spare magazines were at hand – something the largely revolver-armed British appreciated more than most – and accuracy was generally very good.

Constructional standards declined as World War II neared its end, allowing the Allied authorities to circulate largely baseless claims that P 38s fired if dropped, but Soviet sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko, in her memoirs, acknowledged that the P 38 was compact, simple to use and easily maintained. She also valued its reliable safety catch – her Tokarev pistol had none – and the comparatively soft trigger pull.

Attempts were made by the Germans to re-chamber Soviet Tokarev pistols for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge, without success, and the resurgence of the Red Army greatly reduced the number of Soviet pistols that were being captured. Instead, in a reversal of fortunes, the Wehrmacht lost increasingly large quantities of Walthers to the Soviets; many P 38s, for example, now display a large 'X' on the frame or slide that identifies a 'Soviet rework'.



Sniper Steve Kormendy (1922–2013) poses with a captured P 38 in an improvised holster. Born Stefan Koermendy in Prague, Czechoslovakia, he arrived in Canada with his family in 1928 and served with 1st Battalion, The Calgary Highlanders, during World War II. (Author's archives)



Captured in Europe after D-Day, according to the accompanying document dated 26 February 1946, by Kentucky-born US Army Sergeant Robert John Cleves (1923–98), Walther-made P 38 no. 8861b, marked 'ac' over '40', is accompanied by its second-type 'drop flap' holster. The original 'hard shell' Pistolentasche 38 had a roll-over flap to enhance water resistance. The retaining strap, attached to the body, ran up through a loop until the slit could be slipped over a stud on the flap. Comparatively costly to make and awkward to use rapidly, it was replaced by a variant of the Anuschat quick-release holster developed by Albrecht Kind ('Akah') and offered commercially for a range of pistols that included the PP and PPK. The strap could simply be pulled off the stud, allowing the gun to be pulled outward as the flap stitched to the back-edge of the body moved away without resistance. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

THE VOLKSPISTOLEN

As the war progressed and the Wehrmacht's situation began to deteriorate, demands were made for simplified weapons which could be made in quantities great enough not only to replace those that were being lost in enormous numbers – more than 280,000 handguns in the second half of 1944 alone – but also to arm Volkssturm ('people's assault') home-defence units. The double-action P 38, with its sophisticated trigger and safety systems, was an obvious candidate for replacement.

Towards the end of June 1944, Sonderkommission Infanteriewaffen der Waffenkommission des Reichsministers für Rüstungs und Kriegsproduktion (Special Infantry-Weapons Committee of the Weapons Commission of the Minister for Armaments and War Production) noted that several simplified handguns had been submitted for trials with 'Gerätegruppe Pistolen und Revolver'. Among them were a 7.65mm Gustloff blowback, a 7.65mm version of the Mauser HSc with a stamped-steel slide, a locked-breech Mauser with a Browning-like tipping-barrel lock, a Walther, and three types of revolver.

By the middle of November 1944, Wa-Prüf 2 reported that development of simpler pistols had led to the submission of a Mauser and two Walthers at a time when the Reichsministerium für Rüstungs und Kriegsproduktion was already demanding delivery of 100,000 handguns per month, 'including sheet-metal pistols', by December.

Heeres-Pistole/P 38 hybrid no. 27016 is now believed to date from the end of World War II, as its serial number falls at the end of the 'O'-prefix 'ac 45' range. Omitting the slide-top cover, the signal pin and associated springs simplified the slide, milled away ahead of the back sight, but the changes were of no great significance compared with the existence of a rotating-barrel *Volkspistole*. Believed to date from the end of 1943, though some components are stampings, the *Volkspistole* has a forged-and-machined frame and a trigger somewhat like that of the P 38.

Locking recesses were cut in a separate component pinned inside the slide; the bolt, clearly inspired by that of the Austro-Hungarian Steyr-Hahn serving with German police forces, was



Distinguished by its comparatively crude construction, though the position of the trigger betrays the double-action lockwork, this Walther *Volkspistole* incorporates the Steyr-type rotating-barrel locking system. Use of milled forgings for the slide and frame show that this *Volkspistole* dates from the start of the emergency-weapons programme. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

engaged by a cam-and-slot system. Though potentially robust and simpler to manufacture than the P 38, the *Volkspistole* was still too complicated to convince Sonderkommission Infanteriewaffen. A version making greater use of stamped parts may have been developed in 1944, but it was soon abandoned in favour of blowback pistols.

The first Walther blowback *Volkspistole* is believed to have been delivered to Wa-Prüf 2 shortly before 13 November 1944. Relying only on a strong spring and appreciable weight to delay the opening of the breech until pressure had dropped to an appropriate level, it had a double-action trigger, an exposed hammer and a simplified safety lever protruding ahead of the left grip. Well-made, it displayed a Walther banner high on the left side of the slide above the grip.

The second Walther blowback *Volkspistole* mentioned by Wa-Prüf 2 in its 13 November 1944 report may have had a lengthened slab-type frame and a barrel-enveloping stamped-steel slide with a crimped edge. A small banner trademark lay on the left side of the slide together with 'No. 2'. The safety catch was omitted.

Trials with blowback pistols showed the Walther to be more complicated than its Mauser rival, wasteful of raw materials and more difficult to manufacture. Testers also drew attention to its poor double-action trigger, and so, by the end of 1944, Walther delivered a single-action version composed largely of sheet-metal pressings and stampings. The lathe-turned barrel was pinned to the frame, the magazine catch was a simple piece of folded spring-steel behind the magazine aperture on the butt heel, and the folded head of the radial safety lever protruded ahead of the left grip behind the trigger aperture.

On 4 January 1945, following a meeting with SS-Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger and representatives of the Technisches Amt (Technical Office), held in Zella-Mehlis on 30 November 1944, Walther accepted an order for monthly deliveries of '20,000 Volkspistolen Modell Walther'. The war ended before anything more than a handful of pre-production guns could be made, however. When men of the Third US Army reached Zella-Mehlis on 12 April 1945 by way of Buchenwald, dispersal of the priceless collection of experimental and semi-experimental Walthers complicated modern attempts to reconstruct the story of the *Volkspistolen*.



Bearing a variety of serial numbers on individual parts, this pressed-metal *Volkspistole* dates from the end of World War II. The single-action version was the simplest of all Walther's emergency-programme handguns, but nothing could be done before Germany collapsed and hostilities ended. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

The last Mauser P 38s were made with slides bearing the code/date group 'svw' over '45'. This is widely believed to have been 'SVW', as the letters are taller and narrower than the earlier 'byf' type, but the point is academic. Some codes in the 'taa'–'tzz' group were applied as upper case – TJK, TVW on Maschinenpistolen no. 3008, for instance – while others were applied in lower case; the companies were presumably allowed to do much as they liked.

The code 'ozz' was reached in October 1944, but codes from 'paa' to 'rzz' had still to be allocated before reaching the 's' group. Consequently, 'svw' may not have been granted until February 1945, when the code of Mauser's Berlin-Borsigwalde factory changed from 'asb' to 'dd'. Fewer than 10,000 military P 38s, numbered between 3000e and 3750f with gaps, and fewer than 200 police pistols (5500–5650?) bore the 'svw' code. Proof and inspectors' marks paralleled those of the earlier 'byf' over '44' pistols.

Mauser's Oberndorf factory fell to French forces on 20 April 1945, by which time production, according to predictions, should have reached serial number 5000f. Suggestions have been made that it had actually reached about 3750f; and that, despite falling dramatically in the last few days of the war, production had apparently gained momentum in the period between January and March 1945. It is clear, however, that many pistols in the 'd'-, 'e'- and 'f'-suffix blocks had not been completed, as defective examples had been stockpiled until time could be spared to repair them. This was obviously not forthcoming in the last, desperate days of April 1945, although many were subsequently repaired, assembled and finished by the French occupation forces.

DETERMINING P 38 PRODUCTION TOTALS

One source (Krutzek 2017: 54–55) gives the total as 1,277,680 P 38s: 617,585 made by Walther, 372,875 by Mauser and 287,220 by Spreewerke during World War II. Totals offered by Dieter Marschall (2021: 254), however, amount only to 1,152,820. Differences can arise, of course, by basing assessments on P 38s that had been ordered, those that had been delivered, and those that had been accepted for service after inspection. In addition, assessing output in the last few weeks of hostilities has its own specific complications.

Production figures kept unofficially by a Mauser employee showed that 94,682 P 38s were produced between 1 October 1942 and 30 September 1943, followed by an additional 152,003 between 1 October 1943 and 30 September 1944.

The CIOS (Combined Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee) report suggests that production of 9mm pistols in Oberndorf amounted to 321,000 between 1 January 1943 and 31 December 1944; this figure containing a very small number of Lugers, perhaps no more than 10,000, among the P 38s. The report also states that only 23,000 9mm pistols, virtually all of which would have been P 38s, were produced in 1945, even though serial numbers seem to suggest at least 28,750 pistols if

the no-suffix block in the second series had not been used, or 38,750 if it had.

At such a difficult time, of course, repairing defective (but already numbered) pistols was subordinated to making more weapons. Consequently, an apparent acceleration of production hid the fact that monthly deliveries remained constant at best or had declined. Production of pistols ceased on or before 20 April 1945, when French troops arrived to take control of the factory.

An analysis of serial numbers found on Spreewerke-made P 38s, allowing for a wastage factor in the 'a' and 'b' blocks, suggested that 275,000 ($\pm 10,000$) were produced between November 1943 and March–April 1945. In addition, shortly before the Red Army overran the factories, Spreewerke seems to have assembled several thousand P 38s in a separate 0-prefix series from combinations of Spreewerke, Walther, Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre and Böhmisches Waffenfabrik parts. These pistols were extremely badly finished, with prominent milling marks and poorly fitting parts. A large 'U' mark appeared on the left side of their frames above the trigger; it is said to have been an *Untersuchungszeichen* or proof mark. The highest known serial number on such a P 38 is 04291.



Chambered for the 9x18mm or 9mm Police cartridge, PP Super no. 14273 was an enlargement of the PP developed to interest police forces. More powerful than 9mm Short, the 9mm Police cartridge was essentially the 9mm Ultra revisited by way of the 9mm Makarov pattern. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

WALTHER PISTOLS AFTER WORLD WAR II

The collapse of the Third Reich in the spring of 1945 found Walther's Zella-Mehlis factory occupied by soldiers of the Third US Army, among whom, it seems, much of the priceless firearms collection was distributed. Impending civil reorganization, guided by the Yalta Agreement, was to move Thüringen into the Soviet zone. In the event, there was enough time before this change was implemented to allow not only the Walthers but also many other local gunsmiths to flee into the Western Zones before the boundaries were ratified.

The Soviet authorities subsequently removed the usable machine tools, burned the records the Third US Army intelligence specialists had not removed, and then dynamited the factory buildings to prevent them being used by the Allies if the zone borders were ever re-defined. Fortunately, a portfolio of calculator drawings had been saved; the calculator design was completed on a borrowed drawing board in Heidenheim an der Brenz, a small village in Württemberg, and production began again. Walther's first workshop was an old barrack hut, but sales again exceeded all expectations and a small factory was purpose built in nearby Niederstötzingen. A second factory was then created in Gerstetten.

Sales of calculators improved as the British and Americans, in particular, began to encourage business in their occupation zones – which were combined in January 1947 under the name 'Bizonia'. The Soviets, disapproving of the Anglo-American intention to transform their occupation zones into an autonomous state, attempted to starve the remaining Allies out of Berlin; that city remained a quadripartite governancy in the heart of the Soviet occupation zone. So began a period of particular unease, breakdown of cooperation, and the beginning of the Cold War. Once the Western Allies demonstrated that supplies could be airlifted into Berlin when necessary, the Soviets took the decision to ratify

foundation of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland on 23 May 1949 – followed on 5 October by the counter-formation of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik, better known as East Germany.

Weapons production was forbidden by the Allies, but the restrictions stopped short of confiscating the designer's patents despite the great quantities of pistols that had been made for the German armed forces prior to 1945 and the Walther family's links with the NSDAP. Fritz Walther was allowed to exploit his patents in any way short of manufacturing new pistols in Germany, and so the *Olympia-Pistole*, the finest target pistol of its day, was licensed to Hämmerli in Lenzburg (Switzerland) on 31 March 1950 to provide a small royalty income. In 1950, Walther purchased stables in the Donaubastion, a fortification built in Ulm shortly before World War I, and converted them into a makeshift factory where a workforce of six men began to make his newly patented air rifle.

PP and PPK production since 1945

Early in 1952, after negotiations lasting more than 18 months, Walther reached an agreement with Manurhin (Manufacture de Machines du Haut Rhin) of Mulhouse-Bourtzwiller in Alsace, France. Manurhin was to make pistols under arrangements which, amended several times, lasted until 1999. Output of PPs from Mulhouse and Ulm reached approximately 392,570, their serial numbers scattered from 10001 to 710763, alongside about 462,000 PPKs (100001–814495).

Once tooling was completed the first pistols reached the commercial market in the summer of 1955, the first batch, in its entirety, being purchased by the Thelson Import Company of San Francisco. The serial numbers of these pistols were arbitrarily begun at 10001 for the PPs and 100001 for the PPKs; 7.65mm-calibre pistols had plain numbers, while the 9mm Short (.380 Browning) variety had an 'A' suffix letter and .22 rimfires were suffixed 'LR'. Once the serial numbers on the *Polizei-Pistolen* reached 99600, they recommenced at 300301.

Manurhin made PPs and PPKs in 7.65mm and 9mm Short (.32 and .380 Browning), together with slightly modified .22LR rimfire derivatives of both basic designs and special sport and sport target guns. Their finish was generally equal to the pre-war Walthers, owing to Manurhin's own high standards and the quality control exercised by the parent company under the provisions of the licensing agreement. They are essentially similar mechanically to the pre-1945 Walthers, although the firing pin and the safety catch are simplified.

Manufacture of the PP and PPK continued in Mulhouse until January 1985, even though most slides were marked with the Walther banner ahead of 'Carl Walther Waffenfabrik Ulm/Do.' over the designation and calibre marks. Finally, after the sale of Manurhin to Matra and termination of the licence in May 1985, production reverted to Walther, though the .22LR rimfire version continued to be manufactured in France until January 1987, and the last PPK/L was assembled in April. The .22, 7.65mm and 9mm Manurhin versions of

the PPK, numbered in the 10001–329569 group (9mm pistols with ‘A’-suffix numbers, rimfires with ‘LR’), were manufactured from March 1954 until June 1985.

Walther commenced manufacture of the PPK in June 1985, numbering them from 800021, and the first PP, no. 700001, appeared in July 1986. The last pistols were made in December 1999, finishing with 7.65mm PP no. 710763.

Pistols sold as Manurhin products, notably in markets Walther could not serve, bore the company’s distinctive wheel-type trademark on the left side of the slide, between ‘MANUFACTURE DE MACHINES’ above ‘DU HAUT-RHIN’ towards the front and ‘LIC. EXCL. WALTHER’ over ‘MOD. PP Cal. 7,65mm’ towards the rear. The top of most plastic grips bore the Manurhin trademark; the base, ‘LIC. WALTHER. PP’.

Thalson-purchased pistols, however, bore a unique Walther Manurhin banner trademark behind ‘MANUFACTURE DE MACHINES’ above ‘DU HAUT-RHIN’ and ‘Made in France’ to comply with the so-called McKinley Act of 1891, which required the origin of goods brought into the United States to be marked clearly. The legend ‘LIC. EXCL.’ above ‘WALTHER’ above ‘Mod. PP’ above ‘.32 Automatic’ lay between the trademark and the retraction grooves, while ‘MARK II’ was to be found beneath the banner. Thalson continued to import the Manurhin-made Walthers for a short period only, however, the agency subsequently passing to Interarms. The Interarms pistols generally bore the Walther banner trademark above ‘MARK II’ on the front left of the slide, with ‘Mod. PP Cal. 7,65mm’ above ‘.32 Automatic’ above ‘Made in France’ towards the rear. The grips customarily bore the Walther banner trademark instead of the Manurhin wheel.

From 1978 until 1999, Interarms distributed .32 and .38 PPK and PPK/S pistols made in Gadsden, Alabama, by the Ranger Manufacturing Company. The newly created Walther USA, Inc. licensed manufacture to the Black Creek Manufacturing Company of Springfield, Massachusetts, until 2001 and Smith & Wesson then manufactured pistols in Houlton, Maine, until 2013. Eventually, Walther Arms created a factory in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where manufacturing has continued since 2019.

The PP and PPK in use since 1945

The renown in which Walther pistols were held has led to military and police service worldwide.

In addition to pistols acquired for military service, bearing the well-known Bundesheer ‘eagle BH’ marks on their frames, PPs and PPKs marked by Manurhin or Walther will be found in **Austria** bearing a variety of governmental marks. These include ‘JW’ for the Justizwache, responsible for the security of courts and prisoner-transport; ‘LGK’, applied by the Landesgendarmarie; ‘POL’, for pistols issued to police and the Kriminalbeamtenkorps; ‘SW’ and ‘SWO’, identifying men and officers of the Sicherheitswache (state security service) respectively; and ‘Z’ for Zollbehörden (customs officials).

Presented to Erich Honecker, Chairman of the State Council of the DDR 1976–89, this gold-plated engraved .22-calibre 'Pistole PP-1001' – the East German version of the *Polizei-Pistole* – was made by Ernst Thälmann Werke in what had been the Haenel factory in Suhl. (Hülzer/ullstein bild via Getty Images)



A user of Walthers prior to World War II, Denmark's Rigspolitiet (state police) began acquiring new PPs and PPKs in the mid-1960s, bearing the frame mark 'Rplt.'. Others have been reported bearing the 'Gg' mark of the Grenzpolizei (border police), and with a crowned 'SA' usually attributed to the Navy. Many of the police pistols, after years of service, were found to have cracked slides. Consequently, Walther supplied 1,500 strengthened components lacking the signal pin. Proved in Ulm, these display the deer's antler mark of the proof house and a 'JJ' (1988) date-code.

In **West Germany** the 7.65mm PPK was adopted on 22 November 1956 for aircrew as the Pistole 21, though issue was subsequently extended to the Heer and the Bundesmarine (Federal Navy). By 1972, more than 7,500 pistols had been accepted, including nearly 2,000 PPK-Ls with alloy frames. Serial numbers were scattered from 107194 to 273950 (steel frames) and in the 501429–515938 group (alloy frames). Many of the pistols will be found with the NATO-standard number '1005-12-120-0893' and the date of acceptance, e.g. '9/59', on the right side of the slide.

Essentially similar *Polizei-Pistolen* have been issued as the Pistole 22, and .22-calibre rimfires have been acquired for training; the NATO identifiers of these are '1005-12-159-3025' and '1005-99-964-3000' respectively.

Walthers were also acquired in quantity by West German security services, including 3,344 Manurhin-marked PPKs ordered in January 1963 for the West Berlin police. These pistols often bear identifiers such as the 'Berliner rosette', 'BYP' or 'LPBy' for Bavaria, 'Nds' for Niedersachsen or 'S' in a cross applied after sale in Saarland. Pistols acquired by Deutsche Bahn, the railway service, may bear 'DB'; customs officials have used 'BUND'-marked Walthers purchased by the Bundesfinanzministerium (Federal Ministry of Finance), and 'BMI' distinguishes pistols acquired by the Bundesministerium des Innern (Federal Ministry of the Interior) for border guards.

In **Israel**, the authorities bought a number of .22-calibre Beretta and Walther pistols to arm air-marshals and those responsible for protecting the national carrier El Al Airlines, its aircraft and staff. The small calibre was chosen to minimize the risk of compromising pressurized cabins, but hollow-point ammunition was issued to maximize stopping power. The

POST-WAR *POLIZEI-PISTOLE* VARIANTS

The **PP/L**, a 1955-vintage Manurhin-made variant with an alloy frame, was never produced in quantity. A **PPK/L** was also developed in .22 and 7.65mm, weighing 120g less than the standard steel-frame patterns. Production of alloy-frame PPKs subsequently undertaken in Mulhouse in 1955–87 is said to have amounted to 40,831 pistols.

Dating from 1959, the **Sportmodell** was offered in .22 Short or .22 Long Rifle rimfire, with barrel lengths of 155 and 206mm. The standard rifles had a double-action trigger, though the PP/SC was single-action only. The lengthened barrels all protruded past the slide and carried special ramp-mounted front sight blades. Adjustable back sights and spurred hammers were standard. The rifles manufactured and marked in France had plastic grips in which the butt toe curves forward ('bird's head'), but the later Alsace-made Walther-marked rifles reverted to standard grips and had grip extensions on the magazines. All left-side grips have integrally moulded thumbpieces. The standard double-action Sportmodell was numbered from 200001; the longer-barrelled .22 LR Sportmodell 9 and 9C (the latter single-action only) were numbered from 50001C, while the essentially similar models 11 and 11C were numbered from 50001L. The suffixes 'C' and 'L' represented *Court* ('short') and *Longue* respectively.

The Manurhin-made **Sport Scheibe Modell** ('Sport-Target-Model') appeared in 1960 to satisfy demands for cheap yet sophisticated target pistols suitable for rapid-fire training. It had a 215mm barrel, a combination muzzle brake/compensator and wooden target-style grips.

The **PPK/S** was made to satisfy the US Gun Control Act of 1968, which forbade the importation of pistols with an overall height of less than 4in (102mm). Walther initially overcame this problem by developing a hybrid pistol that combined the PP's frame with a PPK slide, but even this failed to bring the overall height below the limit, though the transgression was minimal. Consequently, production was limited until the problem was circumvented by allowing Interarms to manufacture the pistols in Midland, Virginia, unencumbered by import laws. A total of about 263,500 were manufactured in Mulhouse and Ulm from 1968 until 1989, numbered between 238581 and 806271. Production began in Arnsberg in 2012, Europamodell numbering commencing at PL 001 001 and the US variant at WF 001 001.

In 1972, Walther began development of what became known as the **PP Super**, a pistol chambering the then-new 9mm Police cartridge, designed and marketed by Hirtenberg Patronenfabrik in 1968–70 – but really derived from the pre-war 9mm Ultra by way of 9mm Makarov. Walther's prototype, numbered 1001, was based on the standard *Polizei-Pistole*, a web running forward from the trigger guard giving it something of the appearance of a Mauser HSc. The slide and breechblock were altered and strengthened to handle the more powerful cartridge that, just as the 9mm Ultra had done, represented an intermediate stage between the 9mm Short and 9mm Parabellum.

The safety system was subsequently redesigned to incorporate an effectual hammer block, preventing the hammer striking the firing pin

in all but the last stages of a deliberate trigger pull. In this respect Walther returned to the example of the pre-war *Armee-Pistolen* in which a similar mechanical safety was used. The PP Super could not be fired even when dropped with the hammer down on a loaded chamber, because the hammer was held away from the firing pin by the positive lock and the pin itself was also immobilized.

The prototype was gradually improved. The rib was deleted and the trigger guard squared, with an unfortunate effect on aesthetics, and the magazine catch was moved to the left side of the frame halfway down the trigger aperture. Walther claimed that reloading was easier than with the conventional type of catch above the trigger aperture. The new pattern was easily operated by the thumb of the firing hand without altering the handgrip, and reloading was a matter of one second rather than three.

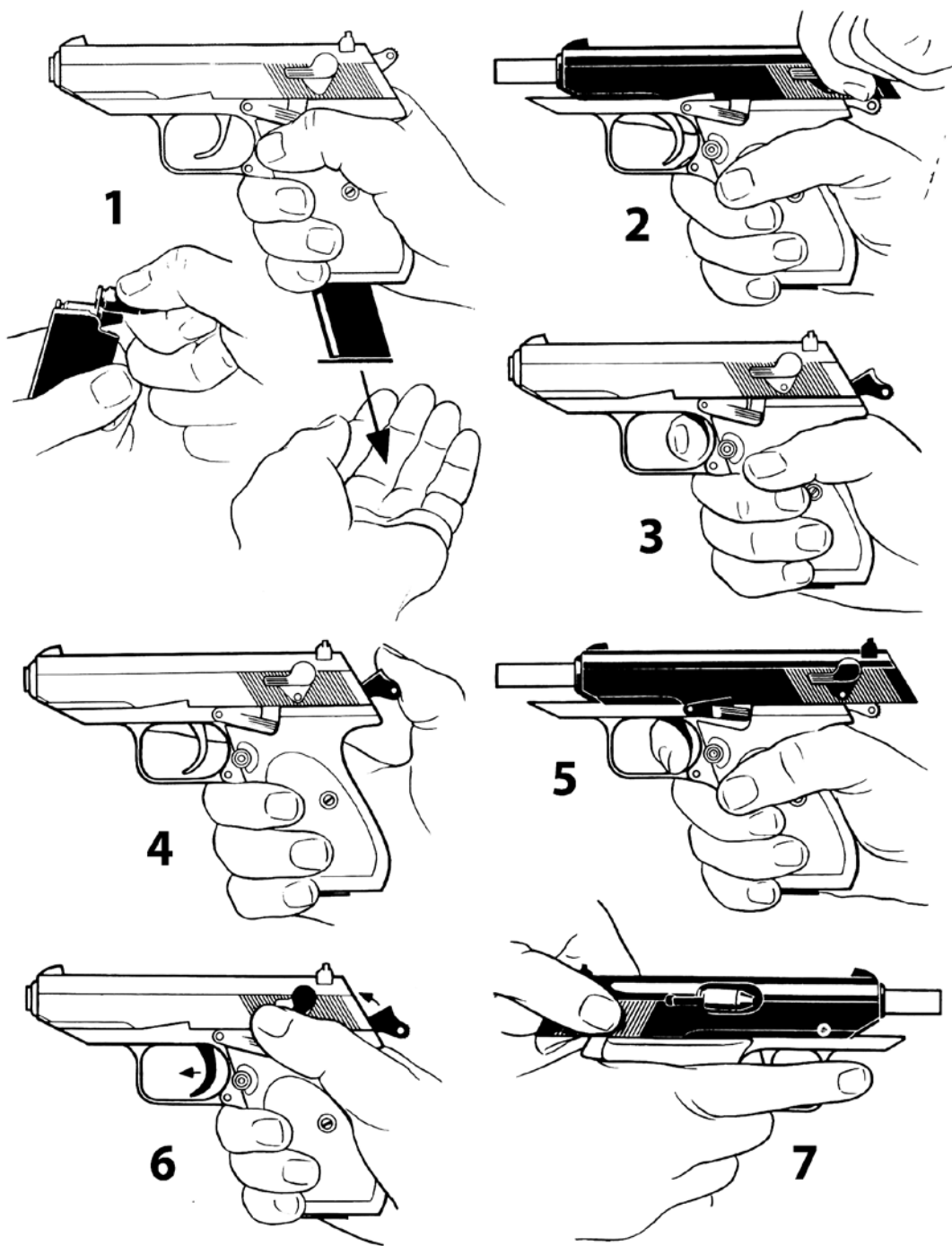
In 1974, representatives of the German police authorities took some pre-production PP Super pistols to a shooting symposium at the Centre Nationale de Perfectionnement de Tir in Paris, where a little over 2,000 rounds were fired in three series. Eight misfires were recorded, five of which fired on a second pull of the double-action trigger. More than 1,000 rounds have been fired flawlessly from a production PP Super without cleaning.

In addition to the revised trigger, incorporating the mechanical safety that blocks the hammer, many advantages were apparent in the PP Super. It had good sights, including a matted slide top, and the standard PP manual safety lay on the left rear of the slide. Its 92mm barrel was long for a pistol of its type, though overall length (176mm) and weight (780g empty) were not much greater than a standard PP. A synthetic buffer was included to soften the effects of recoil, and hence reduce parts wear and stress in the action. The PP Super dismantled like the PP, capitalizing on familiarity, but the grip angle was increased to improve snap-shooting performance. Mechanical and manual hold-open devices were also present.

An alloy-frame prototype was developed experimentally, but abandoned when fretting set in. It weighed only about 615g, which was 175g less than the standard steel-frame pattern.

In 1974, the PP Super went into special police service, for extended trials, and was offered commercially from 1975. In the event, the West German police preferred the locked-breech handguns – the Walther P5, the SIG-Sauer P225 and the Heckler & Koch P7 – and sales of the PP Super, offered in 7.65 and 9mm Short as well as 9mm Police, amounted to just 12,402 before production ceased in 1981.

Announced at the 2000 Internationale Waffen Ausstellung (International Weapons Exhibition) and manufactured until 2007, the **PPK/E** ('E' for 'Europe') is a Hungarian-made FÉG facsimile of the original design – though individual components will often interchange with those made in Ulm. Offered in .22, 7.65mm and 9mm Short, usually blued, the steel-framed PPK/E bears no marks confirming its true origin. Production amounted to about 6,750, numbered from 001 001.



Walther PPKs generally bore the Magen David (six-point star) on the frame, together with the Hebrew-character emblem of the Israel Defense Forces and an acceptance mark.

Some police units in **Sweden** have used *Polizei-Pistolen*, including 7.65mm Manurhin no. 463849 marked 'TILLHÖR POLISEN' ('Police property') and no. 432269 marked 'TILLHÖR TULLVERKET' ('property of the Customs Administration') on their frames.

In **Switzerland**, in addition to police use, Walthers have been issued to Swissair personnel charged with airport security and acting as air-marshals. Once again, .22LR rimfire chambering was chosen to minimize the chance of puncturing pressurized-cabin walls if an emergency arose. Purchases of about 150 PPK-Ls began in 1969, the pistols serving until replaced in 1997 by the 9mm SIG-Sauer P232.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Royal Air Force purchased small quantities of what became known – after trials with the XL47E1 – as the L47A1: these were standard 7.65mm-calibre *Polizei-Pistolen* to be issued to crewmen of 'fast jets' for personal protection. In addition, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps purchased several thousand rimfire *Polizei-Pistolen* in 1974, to be issued to Ulster Defence Regiment personnel as the .22-calibre L66A1. These pistols were taken from commercial production, but were proved by the Güteprüfdienst des Bundesverteidigungsministeriums (Inspection Service of the Federal Ministry of Defence) in Koblenz instead of by a British proof house; their serial numbers are said to range from 41693 to 45088, though potential stragglers such as no. 37669 have been reported. 'LR' (for .22LR chambering) has generally been added to the number on the frame. Selecting .22 LR was intended to minimize danger to bystanders, while still conferring short-range personal protection. Surviving pistols were upgraded in the early 1980s, gaining stronger firing pins and black suncorite-lacquer finish, but were replaced in 1989 by the P5 Compact.

USING THE PP SUPER (OPPOSITE)

Pressing the catch on the left side of the frame behind the trigger allows the magazine to drop free (1). A new magazine can then be inserted and pressed home until the catch engages. With the safety catch applied, the slide can be retracted and then released to chamber a cartridge (2). Releasing the safety catch allows the pistol to be fired either by pulling through on the trigger (3) or by cocking the hammer manually (4). After the last shot has been fired and the spent cartridge case has been ejected, the slide is held back (5). If the pistol is cocked, rotating the safety catch (6) drops the hammer safely even on a loaded chamber. To unload the pistol, the magazine must be removed and the slide cycled to eject the chambered round (7).

(Author)

P 38 and P1 production since 1945

Though restrictions were placed on the Federal Republic of Germany, as the years passed since the end of hostilities many prejudices mellowed. Trade and industry were gradually rebuilt, and the West German authorities, convinced by the recreational value of the *Bierkeller* and shooting clubs, finally allowed the manufacture of airguns to resume. Walther applied to convert old cavalry stables in Ulm to make them, beginning with the LG 51. The focus soon shifted to firearms, however, with the licensing of the *Olympia-Pistole* to Hämmerli and the PP and P 38 to Manurhin.

During the fraught period of the early 1950s, concerned by the ever-growing Soviet threat, NATO took the first steps to establish West German armed forces capable of more than purely local defence. The Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) needed new weapons, and the opportunity was taken to put several wartime designs back into production. Walther's engineers spent three years reconstructing production of the P 38, their task greatly helped by Fritz Walther having hidden pre-1945 technical drawings in his summer-house in Staad on Lake Konstanz.

Ulm-made Walther P 38
no. 319158, with a spare
magazine and wooden case. Note
the last three digits of the serial
number on the slide, and the dot-
in-circle Walther quality-control
marks on the slide and frame.
(Hermann Historica,
www.hermann-historica.de)



The machinery once used by Spreewerke had been seized by the Red Army, and the French had apparently dismantled Mauser's equipment once the choicest machine tools had been removed to France. In 1954, the Allies, mindful of the threat from Eastern Europe, relented sufficiently for Walther to recommence work on what was temporarily known as the P 54. After a protracted delay while trials were undertaken and minor modifications perfected, series production began and the first post-war P 38, no. 001003, left the Ulm factory in May 1957, though Manurhin appears to have assembled a few thousand pistols for export to Portugal and for the West Berlin police in this period.

Some of the original pre-1945 components had been revised. Owing to the need for complete re-tooling, revisions were not only easy to make but also allowed a degree of rationalization. For example, the original firing pin, which had notable flats, was replaced by a new all-cylindrical design, and a change in the shape, design and size of the firing-pin spring. The firing-pin stop was replaced by a new small-diameter limit pin which lacked the old locating shoulder; the machining of the safety-lever spindle was altered to accommodate the new firing pin; and the internal contours of the slide were altered to accept the new safety-lever spindle and firing-pin assembly. Therefore, parts of pre-1946 and post-1957 pistols cannot always be intermixed.

No changes were made to the P 38, redesignated 'P1' by the Bundeswehr in 1963, until a strengthened slide was adopted on 24 July 1968. About 237,000 pistols had been delivered by this date, but a weakness had been discovered where the maker's mark had been rolled into the left side of the slide, which was duly strengthened at the point where it was cut away from the barrel.

Minor changes were made to the firing pin and safety mechanism, though the components remained substantially the same as those used in 1967–68. New slides initially bore a large “*” mark while unmodified pistols remained in service in quantity. As they came in for repair, however, the slides were changed until so few originals remained that the “*”

POST-WAR P 38/P1 MARKINGS

Deliveries to the Bundeswehr began on August 1956, the earliest of a 60,000-pistol initial order bearing the banner trademark ahead of 'Carl Walther Waffenfabrik Ulm/Do.' over 'P. 38 Cal. 9mm'; serial numbers began at 001001. The calibre designation was amended to '9mm Para.' in 1958; pistols supplied from October 1963 substituted 'P 1' for 'P. 38', and, from July 1968, a simplified legend omitting Walther's address was introduced.

P 38s accepted by the Bundeswehr prior to c.1962 bore an eagle over 'BVM' on the front left side of the slide, a property mark applied by the Bundes-Verteidigungs-Ministerium (Federal Defence Ministry). The NATO stock code '1005-12-120-6168' may be encountered on the right side of the slide with the month and year of acceptance: '2/60' for February 1960, '8/68' for August 1968.

Pistols accepted after 1962 bear marks applied on behalf of inspectors of the BWB (Bundesamt für Wehrtechnik und Beschaffung; Federal Office for Defence Technology and Procurement), usually behind the date on the right side of the slide and in front of the company banner on the left. The marks consist of a highly stylized linear eagle over '129' or '165' and are the modern equivalents of the marks applied by Waffenamt sub-bureaux during the Third Reich. The modern pistols also display

manufacturer's inspection and assembly marks, such as a dot-in-circle (a quality-control mark) on the left side of the frame above the trigger and on the front left side of the slide, or a four-point star (signifying change of design) on the dismantling lever. The letter 'W' was applied by the Sankt Wendel maintenance depot, usually in the form 'W 5.87' for '[Sankt] Wendel May 1987', while the rarely encountered 'DK', sometimes mistakenly interpreted as 'Dansk' (Danish), was used by the Doberlug-Kirchhain depot.

Pistols intended for commercial sale generally bear the deer's antler mark of the Ulm/Donau proof house, taken from the Arms of Württemberg. The two-digit proof date, which is not necessarily the same as that of manufacture, appeared on the front left side of the trigger-guard bow prior to the adoption in 1977 of a coding system in which the letters A–K (excluding J) replaced the numerals 0–9. A mark reading 'IH', therefore, signifies 1987.

Some pistols made shortly after production resumed in 1957 simply bore the banner ahead of 'P. 38' or 'P. 38 Cal. 9mm.', but most of these variant marks were short-lived. Pistol no. 301769, however, dating from 1968, displays a simple mark and it is clear that variations have occurred from time to time, particularly at the request of importers who did not wish to draw attention to the actual origins.



This 9mm P 38K, no. 093269 dating from February 1960, was specially made with an 85mm barrel bearing the front sight instead of a 70mm pattern and a sight on the slide-bridge. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)



The 9mm P5 was essentially a compact streamlined form of the P1 with changes to the trigger and safety system. This example, no. 045552, dates from 1985. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)

designator was abandoned. Most post-1957 P 38s and P1s have duraluminium frames, and bear Walther's Ulm/Donau address apart from some supplied by Manurhin to the West Berlin police and the Bundesheer Austrian armed forces) to circumvent treaty regulations.

Walther's designers revised the safety and firing-pin mechanism of the P1 in the 1970s, after a few pistols fired accidentally when dropped on their hammers. The firing-pin lock was discarded and the design of the firing pin was altered. When the trigger was pulled, rotating the hammer

A 5.6mm lfb (.22 LR rimfire) derivative was produced in quantity. Externally similar, it was a simple blowback pistol, as the low power of the cartridge did not require the sophistication of a locked breech. The locking block, its buffer pin and actuator were all omitted, and a change was made to the firing pin. The fixed barrel was held in the frame by a cross-pin, allowing a lightweight 'skeletonized' slide and weaker recoil springs to be used. The loaded-chamber indicator pin was omitted, as it would have represented a source of danger by resting on the primer-filled case rim. The shape, balance, safety and trigger arrangements of the rimfire P 38 were identical to those of the centrefire pistols, and Walther was able to use some of the existing machinery by inserting a rifled 5.6mm-calibre liner in a bored-out and chamberless 9mm barrel. The protrusion of the liner past the breech fills the space normally allowed for recoil. Slides display the banner trademark ahead of 'Carl Walther Waffenfabrik Ulm/Do.' over 'P. 38 Cal. .22LR'. The rimfire P 38s replaced a number of 4mm RWS and 5.6mm Erma Einsteckläufe (sub-calibre barrel inserts), the origins of which lay in pre-war days: the former had been patented in 1921 and the latter in 1927. The first rimfire P 38 reached the market in 1965, production ending in 1987 after several thousand had been made in the form of sub-calibre inserts or complete pistols. Serial numbers ran from 0001 to 8313 and then intermittently from 300000 on. (Author's archives)



by way of the lifting arm, an actuator pinned to the hammer body pushed up the spring-loaded firing-pin seat. The hammer was released at the end of its travel to fly forward onto the firing-pin head; but when the hammer was down on a loaded chamber, the firing-pin head aligned with a hole bored into the hammer-face and could not be driven forward.

Applying the safety catch locked the firing pin in its lower position, where it could not be struck by the hammer. The safety lever also dropped a cocked hammer onto the breechblock face by means of the de-cocking system. This is not as dangerous as it sounds – though undeniably disconcerting – because the firing-pin seat spring forces the pin downwards as the hammer falls, aligning the firing-pin head with the hammer cavity.

Another important change was the addition of a strengthener, the so-called 'hex bolt', running transversely through the alloy frame to improve durability. The change is believed to have been made in June 1975, when serial numbers had reached about 375000.

Despite the introduction of the P4 and P5, large-scale production of the P1 continued until 1992. The 9mm version lasted longest, as work on the 7.65mm Parabellum option, introduced in February 1968, had ceased in 1976 after restrictive laws adopted in Italy removed an important market. However, 7.65mm pistols remained available from stock for many years. Finish was matt black, though blued, plated and decorated versions could be obtained at extra cost.

The P 38 and P1 in use since 1945

By April 1975, Bundeswehr acquisitions had exceeded 250,000; commercial production between May 1957 and April 1975 amounted to another 262,000, numbered from 001003 upward. An 'E' suffix identifies an *Exportmodell*. In addition, P 38s were marketed through France in the mid-1960s by way of Manurhin. Their slides were marked 'Manufacture de Machines' in front of the company's trademark, which in turn lay ahead of 'Pistolet P.1' over '9mm x 19'. They seem to have been assembled largely from Ulm-made parts, allowing the West Berlin police and the

P1 VARIANTS AND DERIVATIVES

The P 38/P1 series has provided the basis for a series of successful commercial variants, including the P 38K, P4 and P5. Controversy surrounds the designations P 38/1 and P 38/2, P 38/I and P 38/II, and P 38 Mark I and P 38 Mark II. There is, however, a simple explanation. P 38s imported into the United States during the later 1950s by Interarms were marked 'II' at the importer's insistence, to distinguish new post-war products from original pre-1945 pistols. The P 38/II, therefore, was identical to the standard Ulm-made P 38. Output of P 38s and P1s manufactured by Walther and Manurhin amounted to about 472,200, numbered from 001001.

Vorserie prototypes of the **P1A1**, an attempt to update the P 38/P1 series by adding a cross-bolt safety catch to the basic P5, dated from September 1987. Only a handful of them were ever made, numbered apparently at random in the V1177–V1454 group.

Incorporating the revised safety system, the **P 38K** can have a barrel shortened until the front sight virtually abuts the slide, or shortened even further, to 70mm, when the sight lies on the slide-bridge. Otherwise the same as the full-size pistol, the perfected P 38K, which weighed 770g, appeared in October 1974 with serial numbers commencing at 500001. The hammer spur was cut short, and the slide cover was discarded. The back sight can be adjusted laterally by means of set-screws in its base.

Prototypes and the pre-production P 38Ks of the *Vorserie* bore the banner mark ahead of 'Carl Walther Waffenfabrik Ulm/Do.' over 'P 38 K' on the slide, but the production version added a calibre mark. A short-barrelled P1 has also been produced in small quantities. Total production of P 38K pistols amounted to 2653 between 1972 and 1981, their serial numbers scattered between 348500 and 502600.

Announced in October 1974 but not available commercially until 1976, the 9mm **P4** was an intermediate stage between the P 38 and the P 38K with a 110mm barrel. Sharing the revised features of the P 38K, it had a distinctively stepped muzzle crown and a special front-sight blade. Markings include 'Carl Walther Waffenfabrik Ulm/Do.' above 'P 4' on the left side of the slide behind the company banner. Serial numbers began at 600001, and production totalled 7,413 by 1981.

The **P5** was developed as a result of the German police handgun trials of 1972–75. The German firearms laws were extensively overhauled at this time, and the 9mm Parabellum cartridge was standardized for military/police use. Dimensions were specified, the magazine had to hold at least eight rounds, and handguns had to be holstered with a chambered round but be ready for firing without requiring a safety catch or de-cocking lever to be actuated.

Four pistols were tested – the Heckler & Koch PSP, Mauser HSP, SIG-Sauer P225 and Walther P5 – but the HSP was soon withdrawn, leaving all of the others to pass the tests effectively. All three were passed for use, though P5s were purchased only by the police of Rheinland-Palatinate and, serving alongside the H&K

P7, in Baden-Württemberg. The state police of the Netherlands also purchased the P5 in quantity.

The P5 shares the perfected trigger system of the P1 and P4, and many of the fittings are identical. Even though it looks very different externally, the changes are largely cosmetic. The traditional safety mechanism had, however, been replaced by a design now widely credited to Walter Ludwig, co-designer of the SIG-Sauer P220, though the relevant German patent, 2855224 sought by Carl Walther GmbH on 21 December 1978, names Franziska Schmid-Rembold as co-inventor.

Firing of the P5 can take place merely by squeezing the trigger. The magazine follower holds the slide open after the last round has been fired and ejected, the de-cocking lever being pressed after replenishing the magazine to allow the slide to run forward and chamber a new cartridge. A second press on the de-cocker disconnects the sear and allows the hammer to fall safely.

The P5 has a distinctive barrel-enveloping slide, superior sights and a longitudinally fluted strip between the sights to suppress unwanted reflections. The trigger guard has been enlarged to admit a gloved finger.

The handling qualities and two-stage de-cocking system were generally approved by firers, but the magazine catch was judged to be badly placed for rapid reloading and the internal slide stop hindered the clearance of double-feeds. Consequently, the P5 and the shorter P5 Compact were never as successful as the SIG-Sauer P6 (P225), adopted by the Bundesgrenzschutz (Federal border guard) and the Zolldienst (customs service) as well as several police forces, and the Heckler & Koch P7M8 (PSP) favoured by anti-terrorist unit GSG 9 (Grenzschutzgruppe; Border Protection Group). Service was restricted to state police in Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Palatinate.

The P5 was purchased for the Dutch national police, serving until replaced in 2013 by the Walther P99Q, while small quantities were acquired by Nigeria and Portugal. The British authorities acquired 2,500–3,000 P5 Compacts, which served as the 9mm Pistol L102A1. Also, possibly no more than 100 long-barrelled 'P5 Lang' pistols were made in 1988.

Alterations to the P5's hammer and magazine catch were made in May 1986, the dismantling catch was changed in January 1987 and, in December 1990 at pistol no. 100202, an adjustable trigger stop appeared.

Proposed in 7.65mm and 9mm Parabellum, 7.65mm Auto (.32 ACP), 9mm Short (.380 ACP), 9mm Police, 9mm IMI and .22 LR rimfire, introduced in 1977 and discontinued in 1998 after about 102,000 full-length pistols numbered from 001001 and just 5,569 compact examples had been made, the P5 gave way to the P88; the Walther–Barthelmes locking system finally lost out to the Browning tipping-barrel.

Austrian Bundesheer to buy weapons that conformed with inter-Allied treaty restrictions.

In **Austria** the P1, replacing a large number of rebuilt war-surplus P 38s often mixing *Heeres-Pistole* and P 38 components and displaying Austrian 'NPv' proof marks, remained the service pistol of the Bundesheer and police until replaced by the Modell 80 Glock. The P1s were initially supplied by way of Manurhin, to avoid restrictions then placed on the export of German-made weapons, and bear an 'eagle BH' mark on the frame.

In **Chile** the Army acquired substantial quantities of Ulm-made Walthers, apparently from normal commercial production. It is believed that at least some of them acquired a simplified version of the national coat-of-arms and 'EJERCITO DE CHILE' on the slide or frame.

Assembled in 1946–47 by Československá Zbrojovka from parts found at an old Spreewerke factory in Hradkou-nad-Nisou, a small town in northern Bohemia, 3,000 P 38s served Czechoslovakia's military (or, perhaps, police) as the vz.46 until the introduction of the indigenous vz.52. Though assembled from wartime Spreewerke parts, they were newly finished and had the appearance of new pistols. The left side of the trigger-guard web bears '46'. In addition, newly made ex-East German pistols have been reported with 'N'-prefix serial numbers and enwreathed 'ab' over '9' stampings.

In **France**, the authorities decided to use Mauser-Werke's Oberndorf factory, which had been captured virtually intact, to assemble and repair existing P 38 components. There is some evidence that a few trial pistols bearing two-digit no-suffix serial numbers were initially assembled to develop proofing and inspection techniques, and work subsequently continued in earnest until rather fewer than 5,000 P 38s had been assembled. Some had already been numbered, proofed and inspected by the local WaA inspectorate, but others were completely unmarked; the French, however, carefully renumbered all the mismatching parts in accordance with the master serial number on the frame, which meant that some had new serial numbers struck over the original German figures.

Most of the pistols assembled from German-made parts had the standard Mauser duotone finish of a wash-blued barrel and phosphated slide and frame, and were in the 'd'-, 'e'- and 'f'-suffix serial-number groups. Small quantities of all-blue pistols, however, were issued to French police and border guards.

The French soon exhausted the supplies of usable parts and, despite the protests of the other Allies, resumed P 38 production. The first new

French troops engage the Viet Minh, 1949 (opposite)

In a typical French Indochina pastoral landscape, backed by mountains, a French soldier takes aim with his Mle 24/29 Châtellerauld light machine-gun at a distant Viet Minh column. The NCO giving directions is armed with a US-made M3 knife and a Walther P 38 pistol assembled under French supervision in the Oberndorf factory after World War II had ended. These newly made pistols are customarily identifiable by their dark-grey finish and sheet-metal grips.



Typical of the P 38s used by the French in Indochina is this 'svw 46' example, no. 6337k, among the last to be made by the French in Oberndorf before work stopped in the spring of 1946. Many of the French Walthers were used and lost in Indochina in the late 1940s and early 1950s, though some lasted long enough to serve in the subsequent Vietnam War. They bore four distinctive proof and inspectors' marks: a small five-point star on the right side of the slide, on the left rear of the barrel block and on the locking piece, an 'RW' monogram used as a barrel inspection mark, a 'flaming bomb' and a cloverleaf. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)



pistols probably appeared in the summer of 1945, sporting a very distinctive dark-grey finish: in some cases, it was almost black. Their serial numbers continued the old German sequence, from about 3750f, and had reached the 'k'-suffix block by the end of the year. The slide code/date group was then changed to 'svw' over '46' and a few more pistols were made before production stopped in April 1946. The highest serial number observed during research has been 492 in the 'l' suffix series.

The French finally vacated the Oberndorf factory on 2 May 1946. They destroyed production records, hiding the true facts of operations; and, by doing so, made the task of the modern-day historian virtually impossible. It has been estimated that, in addition to pistols that had been taken from German forces, the French assembled about 10,000 P 38s in the pre-'f' German serial-number ranges, then produced perhaps 51,000 in 1945 and a mere 4,000 in 1946. Another estimate, however, places the total – whether assembled or newly made – at only 37,000.

The armed forces of **East Germany** used many thousands of P 38s. Many wartime pistols were refurbished – probably in Suhl, where there had always been a firearms industry – while others were assembled from a jumble of parts. It is relatively easy to find East German P 38s with Walther frames and Spreewerke slides, or Mauser slides and Spreewerke frames. Frames, slides and barrels were usually renumbered to match the master (frame) mark and many acquired 'A' suffixes stuck over the original letter.

Small numbers of *Heeres-Pistolen* were also used, and some hybrid *Heeres-Pistole*/P 38s were assembled by combining, for example, *Heeres-Pistole* slides and P 38 frames. In these, the frame serial number was taken as the master and the other parts were renumbered accordingly. Consequently, the old *Heeres-Pistolen* slides bore a second serial number low down on the left side, above the dismantling lever. The styles of the frame and 'new' slide serial numbers were often noticeably different.

Limited post-war barrel production was undertaken on ex-Spreewerke machinery, probably after 1950 judging by the style of the proof marks. The new barrels could be identified by the 'crown/N' proof mark on the underside, a short distance from the frame, because the East

German crown was taller and shaped differently compared with its imperial forerunner.

In the second half of 1953, about 120 P 38s numbered from 1000 to 1120, with an 'N' prefix on all but the earliest examples, were made with new frames, slides and barrels combined with a variety of pre-1945 parts. They had horizontally ribbed grips, dark-green or black in colour, and lacked the internal marks found on pre-1945 equivalents. Work was undertaken secretly in what had been the Haenel manufactory in Suhl's Bahnhofstrasse; most bore *Abnahmebeamte* (inspection officers) marks 'A.B.' over '9' within a wreath of oakleaves, usually struck into the front left side of the trigger-guard bow where it joined the frame.

Another mark associated with East German Walthers consists of a number within a sunburst. Often called the 'East German Daisy', this was used by the Volkspolizei: the number refers to the individual district, '1' being Rostock and '16' Wismut.

In **Lebanon**, the Army used small quantities of Ulm-made P 38s, some of which were supplied through Manurhin. Use of distinctive marks, if any, remains unknown.

In 1961 the P 38 was adopted by **Norway** as the m/38 after competitive trials had been completed; an order for Ulm-made P 38s was placed in 1962. About 25,000 pistols had been acquired by 1975, taken from commercial production and bearing serial numbers ranging from 107857 to 393696. A typical example, no. 198245, displays the last three digits on the slide ahead of the safety catch and '1/63' (January 1963) on the right side of the slide. The banner, Walther's Ulm/Donau address and a distinctive 'N' on a crowned shield between 'P38' and 'Cal. 9mm', lie on the left side of the slide. Issued in a distinctive rubber or later vinyl holster, the Norwegian P 38s served until replaced in 1985 by the Glock.

In **Pakistan**, Walther pistols have been used by the Navy and the Army's medical corps, but information is still required.

Ulm-made P 38s were supplied to **Portugal** for issue as the Modelo 961, serving until superseded in 2019 by the Glock. Use of distinctive marks by the Army, if any, remains unknown. However, the Guardia Nacional Republicana applied a 'GNR' monogram to the left side of the slide or the right side of the frame. Some of the Portuguese Walthers, including GNR-marked *Heeres-Pistole*/P 38 hybrid no. 19088, seem to have been acquired in the early 1950s by way of Czechoslovakia.

In **Turkey**, a handful of appropriately unmarked unlicensed copies is said to have been made by Kirrikale Tüfek Fb. of Ankara at a time when the Turkish military was considering adopting the Walther P 38. Being largely hand-made, they differ in detail from German-made examples and their external finish is noticeably inferior. The maker's mark and 'Cap. 9mm.' lie on the slide, and the grips are plain walnut.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Ministry of Defence bought a substantial quantity of 9mm P5 Compact Walthers, which were issued for military use as the L102A1 and appropriately marked on the left side of the slide while the right displays the NATO stock number '1005-99-978-4952'. Delivered by 1991, with serial numbers in the 172000 group, they have a distinctive phosphate finish.



IMPACT

Walther's worldwide influence

The aftermath of the shooting in Hamburg-Poppenbüttel of policeman Norbert Schmid by Gerhard Müller and Ulrike Meinhoff, members of the terrorist Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction). Taken on 23 October 1971, a day after the attack, this crime-scene photograph shows a Walther PPK associated with the killing. (Peter Timm/ullstein bild via Getty Images)

The instantaneous success of the double-action *Polizei-Pistole* in post-1930 Germany caused consternation among rival gunmakers. Almost overnight, the PP had rendered handguns such as the Sauer *Behörden-Modell* and the older Mausers obsolescent. Though Sauer and Mauser both attempted to introduce modernized versions of their traditional handguns (e.g. the Mauser Modell 1934), they were still far inferior to the Walther. By 1939, only Mauser and Sauer had successfully managed to compete on the commercial market – the former with the HSc and the latter with the 38H. Menz had tried, but even the double-action PB Spezial did not have the marketing to make any inroads on the market and the exploiter collapsed. Gustloff-Werke tried to produce an effectual pistol during World War II, but the timing was wrong; in addition, there were so many teething troubles that the project was abandoned before it had really been completed.

When World War II finished, however, the forcible removal of Walther from the world's marketplace enabled many rivals to steal the design of the *Polizei-Pistole* and produce very similar-looking pistols. As early as 1933, Georges Warnant of Paris, a member of the Belgian gunmaking family, had submitted a PP-like pistol chambering the 7.65mm Longue cartridge to military trials undertaken in France, and a few enlarged *Polizei-Pistolen* chambering the 7.62mm Tokarev cartridge, the so-called *Pistolety Baltiyskiy* ('Baltic Pistols'), were hand-made in Leningrad shortly after the German invasion in the summer of 1941.

In some cases resemblance to the Walthers is largely superficial, only the distinctive external shaping being used – particularly by lesser manufacturers whose capabilities did not extend to the double-action trigger and complex safety arrangements of the original design. Others, more enterprising and more certain of their production methods, copied



This .22 rimfire PP copy, made in East Germany for police and security services, bears the distinctive inventory code on the slide. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

the entire pistol. In addition, a wide range of blank-firers have shared the lines of the PP and PPK, and even the P 38/P1 (in the form of the Erma EP 822).

Near-facsimiles have appeared in many countries, including pistols made by Bersa in Argentina, by Astra-Unceta in Spain, in Turkey, and within European communist-bloc states such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania. There are far too many clones to give anything other than a brief summary in this study; yet even this suffices to show just how great the legacy of Fritz Walther's 1929 patents has been.

The earliest and most blatant copies were made by Kirikkale Tüfek Fb of Ankara-Kurumu in **Turkey** from 1948 onwards for the Turkish Army and – latterly – for commercial sale. The pistol is a straightforward copy of Walther's *Polizei-Pistole* in 7.65mm or 9mm Short, offering good quality despite occasional evidence of hand-finishing. The smaller-calibre pistol has prominent recesses milled longitudinally in the slide to save weight.

Turkish Army pistols are usually marked 'T.C. Ordusu' above 'Subaylarına Mahsus' ('Turkish Army, for officers' use only'), the serial number generally appearing on the right side of the frame in standard Walther manner. The extent of plagiarism even extended to a passable facsimile of the Walther banner-shape moulded into the lower portion of the original plastic grips – even if the contents did read 'KIRIKKALE'. When the injection dies wore out, the grips were made with a straight-sided banner that subsequently became standard. In the late 1960s, Kirikkale Tüfek was renamed Makina ve Kimya Endüstrisi, whereupon the grip logo changed to an encircled 'MKE'. These MKE-marked pistols are not normally dated, unlike many of their Kirikkale predecessors, which bear dates such as '1953' on the slide above the serial number. The Turkish pistols all have butt-heel magazine catches rather than the more traditional Walther cross-bolt through the frame behind the trigger.

HUNGARIAN PISTOLS

Work on a PP-like pistol may have begun with the intention of replacing the 37.M service pistol, but World War II ended before anything could be achieved. However, Fegyvergyár engineer Lajos Előd was recalled when a 7.65mm double-action pistol was required for the Hungarian police. About 22,000 Rendőrségi Pisztoly 48.M (M48 police pistols) were made in Budapest in 1948–57 by Fémáru és Szerszámgépgyár, many of which were supplied to border- and bank guards (Vám- és Pénzügyőrség), and a few hundred chrome-plated pistols went to high-ranking officials. Pistols may be found with state emblems – police, Rakosi or Kádár crests – moulded into the grips. Slides are generally marked ‘FÉMÁRU ÉS SZERSZÁMGÉPGYAR N.V. BUDAPEST’ over ‘48.M. KAL. 7.65mm’. Serial numbers such as ‘R-09788’ appear on the left side of the frame below the magazine release.

The 48M led to a variant produced in accordance with a contract placed by the Egyptian government in 1957. Chambering the 9mm Short cartridge, the Walam – ‘Wal’ for Walther, ‘Lam’ for Fegyver’s comparatively short-lived post-1948 name, Lámpagyár – is a near-copy of the *Polizei-Pistole*, but exhibits some important differences. Though some components of Hungarian and German pistols will interchange, including magazines, superficial differences can be seen in the Walam frame contours and the rounded overhang of the slide and frame at the rear. A vertically moving pin-type loaded-chamber indicator lies on top of the slide above the cross-bolt magazine release, there are 20 vertically-milled retraction grooves on the slide, and a different safety-lever thumbpiece. A prominent hole is drilled through the trigger-guard bow web where it joins the frame, and an equally obvious step is machined in the frame behind the trigger-guard pivot (much like the earliest Walthers). The trigger guard is somewhat more angular than that of its Walther counterpart, while the hammer is solid rather than ring-tipped.

The Walam has a distinctive plastic magazine extension. Egyptian-contract pistols, with ‘E’-prefixed serial numbers, display the Egyptian crest on the left side of the slide between ‘WALAM 48’ above ‘Cal. 9mm Brow. Short’ and ‘Made in Hungary’ over ‘FÉG 1958’. Serial numbers range from E00001 (or perhaps

E01001) up to at least E10164, possibly in two blocks, as no Egyptian-crest Walams numbered between E04000 and E07000 have been found – Walams reported in this group all lack the Egyptian crest. In addition, otherwise unmarked Walams were imported to the United States in 2011 by Century Arms International of Georgia, Vermont. It is assumed that these were pre-1960 pistols that had been extensively refinished. Walams have also been reported with ‘HEGE’ marks applied by West German importers Hege-Waffen GmbH.

Next came the RK59 pistol for the police service, chambered for the 9mm Makarov cartridge to standardize with handguns used throughout the Soviet bloc. As the aluminium-alloy frame proved insufficiently durable, however, the RK59 gave way to the R61 and PA63 for the police and Army respectively, with an alloy frame strengthened by the inclusion of titanium and a trigger/safety system modified by FÉG engineer József Kameniczky.

The R61 police pistol, chambered for the 9mm Makarov cartridge, was made in Budapest in 1961–78 and again, in very small numbers, in 2003–05. Slides usually bear the Kádár crest on the left side, between ‘R61’ and ‘Cal. 9mmM’ and ‘FÉG’ above ‘Budapest’. Pistols of this type were distributed in the United States by Century Arms, Inc. of St. Albans, Vermont (‘B’-prefix serial numbers), and by KBI, Inc. of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (‘C’-prefix serial numbers). Some R61 pistols were re-chambered for the 9mm Short/.380 CP cartridge, far more common in North America than Makarov ammunition.

The success of the R61 persuaded the Hungarian military authorities to order a variant for the Hungarian Army. Made in Budapest in 1963–90, the 9mm Makarov PA63 had a longer barrel than its predecessors. Early examples had a bright-finish alloy frame and a blued steel slide, but the frame of military-issue pistols – with inspection and property marks on the left side of the frame behind the trigger – was subsequently anodized in a bluish colour even though the two-tone finish was retained on some police pistols and those destined for commercial sale. American importers included PW Arms, Inc. of Redmond, Virginia, and KBI Inc.

Slide markings include ‘Kirikkale Tüfek Fb. Cap. 9mm’ on the earliest pistols, then a transitional mark with an additional ‘M.K.E.’ over the regular inscription, but the latest are simply marked with the encircled ‘MKE’ logo and ‘MADE IN TURKEY’. The calibre mark – e.g. ‘380 AUTO’ – now generally lies on the right side of the slide, while the marks of several American import agencies may be encountered, including ‘FCI’ (Firearms Center, Inc.), of Victoria, Texas.

The PA63 and the smaller PA66, sometimes sold commercially from c.1967 as the 'Attila', in 7.65mm Browning and 9mm Short, are closer copies of the PPK and PP respectively than the Walam. The AP series lacks the loaded-chamber indicator, and the overhang of the slide and frame behind the grip has been noticeably sharpened. The slides usually display only 15 retraction grooves. Steel-frame pistols have an additional 'S'-suffixed designation, alloy frames being regarded

as standard, and the chequered thumb-rest-type plastic (but sometimes wood) grips rarely bear markings. Pistols have been sold in Belgium by FN Herstal as the 'FN AP', and in Germany by Hege-Waffen GmbH of Schwäbisch Hall. The slides of many sold by Hege-Waffen bore a large cursive 'GSM' trademark ahead of 'MAUSER OBERAUDORF GERMANY' above 'SLP1. Cal. 7.65mm (.32 Browning)' – which is odd, as the Mauser business has always been situated in Oberndorf.



The Hungarian FÉG-made Attila was a *Polizei-Pistole* clone – so close a copy, indeed, that it was sold in West Germany as a 'pseudo PP'. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

Small numbers of *Polizei-Pistolen* were made in East Germany after the end of World War II, but were probably assembled from incomplete parts found in the Zella-Mehlis factory in 1945 plus, perhaps, others cannibalized from surviving pistols. It seems unlikely that the pistols were entirely newly made, owing to the seizure of the original production machinery by the occupying Soviet forces; but though the frames are plain behind the trigger-guard pivot (a characteristic of late World War II

Smith & Wesson marketed the .380 PPK/S, made under licence, in the United States prior to the formation of Walther Arms, Inc. This particular pistol incorporates a frame with Ulm proof marks applied in 2015. Interarms distributed PPK and PPK/S pistols made in Gadsden, Alabama, by the Ranger Manufacturing Company, Inc. (1978–99), before Walther USA, Inc. licensed manufacture to the Black Creek Manufacturing Company of Springfield, Massachusetts (1999–2001). Smith & Wesson made pistols in Houlton, Maine, from 2002 until 2013, and Walther Arms, Inc. has been making them in Fort Smith, Arkansas, since 2019. In the mid-1970s, the Indian Arms Corporation of Detroit announced the P.380 – made from precision stainless-steel castings, with squared frame and slide contours, diagonally milled retraction grooves, wooden grips and a reshaped hammer. Chambering the 9mm Short (.380 ACP) cartridge, with a six-round magazine, it bore a large cursive ‘Indian Arms Corp.’ over ‘DETROIT, MICH., U.S.A.’; production apparently failed after no more than a handful of prototypes had been assembled. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)



production), the slides of most East German pistols exhibit a perceptible change in contours at the muzzle; additional slides may have been necessary to complete the original parts-sets.

The distinctive East German ‘crown/N’ nitro proof mark will be found on the left side of the slide, the barrel and the frame. Serial numbers such as ‘20175’ appear on the right side of the slide and frame, while the product-code ‘1001-0-Cal.7,65’ or ‘1001-0-Cal. 22’ will be found on the left of the slide. Volkspolizei (people’s police) marks may also be found. The plain injection-moulded plastic grips are chequered, but devoid of insignia.

Facsimiles of the PPK made in **China** are careful, if somewhat crude copies. Minor changes made in the trigger pull have even given a smoother pull than the original. The most obvious identification features are the proliferation of unpolished machining marks, the crude copy of the standard Walther slide legend, and ‘Type 1’ in ideographs on the frame. A typical example bears a large five-point star located on the left side of the slide between serial number ‘01624’ and the date ‘1952’. The injection-moulded plastic grips bear a ‘Factory 356’ banner mark, the magazine-release is a cross-bolt, and a small lanyard loop lies on the butt heel. They lack the matted slide-top and display 22 retraction grooves milled vertically into the slide-side.



CONCLUSION

The rise to international prominence of the manufactory founded by Carl Walther resulted from a combination of first-class products, astute management and, particularly during the Third Reich, close proximity to the regime. Though these advantages were unable to prevent the destruction of the Zella-Mehlis factory after the end of World War II and the loss of intellectual property, Fritz Walther masterminded a renaissance by licensing production of the *Olympia-Pistole*, the *Polizei-Pistole* and the PPK outside Germany. In addition, the onset of the Cold War and the burgeoning belief that West Germany needed a way of defending itself played a vital role. A fresh start could be made, and the P 38 duly returned to front-line service with the Bundeswehr.

Hermann Göring presented PPK no. 889230 to his second wife, Emmy Sonnemann, to celebrate their marriage in Berlin Cathedral on 10 April 1935. The pistol was engraved with acanthus leaves and bore the Sonnemann family shield-of-arms on the front right side of the slide. (Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com)



Though Walther has seen hard times in the last 20 years, the PPK and PPK/S are still being offered in 7.65mm ACP, 9mm Short and .22LR rimfire. Ready availability of war-surplus weaponry and Walther's own post-war production have ensured that the pistols have seen use worldwide. Apart from individual adoptions detailed elsewhere, the Correctional Service Canada issued P1s to guards transporting prisoners, at least 10,000 Walthers were given to the Afghan police in the early 2000s, and several thousand went to the Kurds in Iraq in 2014. The P1, apparently supplemented by the P5, remains the issue handgun of the South African police; and countless Walthers have been used in Vietnam, Cambodia and elsewhere in what was once French Indochina. (Carl Walther Waffenfabrik, www.carl-walther.de)



ABOVE LEFT

Introduced to replace the P 38/P1 series, the P88 embodied a tipping-barrel locking system. Pistol no. 001008 from the initial production run bears Ulm proof marks dated 1987. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

ABOVE RIGHT

While James Bond is closely associated with the PPK, the association between Walther and Ian Fleming's legendary character passed to the P99, reflected in this special commemorative model. The PPK is mentioned in all of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels from *Dr. No* (1958) to *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965). The P5 appeared in the films *Octopussy* and *Never Say Never Again* (both 1983); a .40S&W Walther P99 was used in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), *The World Is Not Enough* (1999), *Die Another Day* (2002) and *Casino Royale* (2006), then replaced in *Quantum of Solace* (2008) by the PPK. A PPK/S was used in *Skyfall* (2012), while the Bond-franchise novel *Carte Blanche*, written by Jeffery Deaver and published in 2011, featured the PPS. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

The strengths and weaknesses of the P 38 have already been examined in detail and there is no doubt that, despite pre-1940 origins, it remained one of the finest available service-pistol designs when reintroduced in 1957; but the delay in resuming production after the end of World War II gave rivals such as the FN-Browning GP Mle 35 time to dominate markets worldwide. Beretta copied the basic P 38 operating system in the M951, another design that has gone on to great things in the form of the Beretta 92 and its many derivatives. As the 20th century ran its course, however, Walther lost much of its onetime pre-eminence, as the P1 was overtaken by the Glock 17 and the Heckler & Koch PSP with their polymer frames and technically advanced safety systems. Introduction of the P88, featuring a tipping-barrel locking system, failed to reverse the downward trend, and the death of Fritz Walther's son Karl-Heinz in 1983 meant that the company's fortunes rested on Hans Fahr, Karl-Heinz's nephew.

By the early 1990s, as profitability continued to deteriorate and shortly after Steyr-Mannlicher GmbH showed interest, the Umarex Group of Arnsberg-Neheim, Germany's largest maker of blank-firers, acquired Walther. This allowed the 'gas guns' to bear the banner, which was ironic: the origins of Umarex lay in the work of Walter Riem, an engineer who, working for Walther in Zella-Mehlis, had designed the Perfecta blank-firer patented in June 1933 and again, in an improved form assigned to Mayer & Riem ('MaRie'), in December 1950.

Wulf-Heinz Pflaumer, trained as a gunsmith and cutler, became managing partner of Mayer & Riem KG in 1973. Joined in 1979 by Franz Wonisch, Pflaumer then oversaw the acquisition of Reck Sportwaffenfabrik Karl Arndt. Trading briefly as 'Uma-Reck' before becoming Umarex, the new company continued to produce blank-firers in huge quantities. The P1 and P88 were replaced by the innovative P99, designed by a team led by the former technical director of Steyr-Mannlicher, Horst Wesp, which was unveiled at the 1996 Internationale Waffen Ausstellung. Work on the traditional PPK continues today in 9mm Short and .22 rimfire (PP only). Walther has also left a legacy in the form of high-quality commemoratives, including celebration of 50 years' production of the P 38 (1938–88) and the company's centenary (1886–1986, P 38, P5), together with special PPs marking the end of production in Ulm in 1999 after 70 years.

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To: Alison, Adam, Nicky, Findlay, Georgia and Holly – with love.

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Artist's note

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The publishers regret that they can enter into no correspondence upon this matter.

Front cover, above: Walther PPK no. 1002020, one of the so-called 'million series', was used in the post-war period by the East German secret police, the Stasi. It was equipped with the silencer associated with the ČZ Skorpion pistol. (Hermann Historica, www.hermann-historica.de)

Front cover, below: Clutching his Walther P 38, an officer of Panzergrenadier-Division 'Grossdeutschland' teaches recruits to cross barbed wire safely in October 1943. (dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo)

Title-page photograph: After 1945 the P 38 was succeeded in German service by the P1. Pictured in April 2002, members of Germany's Luftwaffe Wachbataillon (Guard battalion) elite drill unit display their ceremonial skills. The men have Kar 98k rifles while the officer has a P1 pistol in a special white-leather holster. (Ulrich Baumgarten via Getty Images)